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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the process and procedures of the New York City Board of Education in the definition, identification, tracking, and monitoring of student dropouts in selected New York City high schools. The full report is organized in three parts. Part One provides a summary of data obtained (through observations and interviews) from visits to 11 comprehensive high schools in the five boroughs. Part Two examines comparative studies of schools with high and low dropout rates in three boroughs. Part Three compares dropout definitions and the procedures for monitoring dropout rates in New York City and five other large metropolitan school districts. An addendum summarizes the findings of a comprehensive survey of all of the public high schools in the New York City system. Recommendations are grouped into the following categories: (1) attendance procedures; (2) admissions and discharges; (3) absences, truancy and suspensions; (4) automated or manual student accounting system; (5) identification of at-risk students; (6) comparisons across six city school districts; (7) general. Recommendations include: (1) implementing a uniform computerized attendance system; (2) improving communication between high schools and the Office of Student Information Services to minimize errors in students enrollment, absence, and dropout data; (3) providing extra support to schools with high dropout rates; and (4) standardizing the method of identifying dropouts. (ETS)

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Final Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A STUDY OF THE IDENTIFICATION, MONITORING AND TRACKING
OF POTENTIAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT DROPOUTS

FOR THE

NEW YORK CITY

BOARD OF EDUCATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**Purpose of the Study**

The problem of identifying and monitoring dropouts is especially complex in the New York City Public Schools. Because of this complexity, the present study was developed in response to a request from the New York Alliance for the Public Schools in consultation with the Chancellor's Office. The major purpose of the study was to evaluate the process and procedures of the New York City Board of Education (NYCBE) in the definition, identification, tracking, and monitoring of student dropouts in selected New York City high schools.

In order to accomplish this objective and to identify weaknesses and inconsistencies in the procedures found in several selected high schools, particular attention was given to the pupil accounting system within high schools. This included such factors as the attendance record-keeping process; admissions and discharge procedures; criteria for determining absences, truancy and suspensions; procedures for identifying the at-risk student; and other factors that affect the system's ability to identify, classify, and monitor students who are, or will become, high school dropouts.

The study examined procedures in use in selected public high schools. Although attempts were made to report accurate descriptions of the ways these schools dealt with student dropouts at the time the study was conducted (fall 1985 and early spring 1986), in some instances these procedures may not correspond to policy established by the central Board of Education. Herein lies one of the major advantages of the study. That is, Board policy may be checked or corroborated with what in fact is reported to be occurring in the schools sampled.

Furthermore, what was found in the selected high schools in this report may not be true for the other approximate 100 high schools throughout the city. Thus, some conclusions contained in the full report have been revised or modified based on a comprehensive mailed survey (spring 1986) to all high schools in the system. A summary report of this survey is found in Appendix H.

Procedures

This project was sponsored and funded by the New York Alliance for the Public Schools and directed by staff at New York University. In order to establish a project research team (and on the basis of Alliance protocol), the project directors established contact with each of the deans of the Schools of Education who are Alliance members. They were asked to nominate qualified faculty members who would be interested in participating in the project. In addition, a number of initial interviews were held

with various Board personnel both to inform them of the study and to solicit their assistance in the data gathering process. Also, a contact was established between the Chancellor's office and the project directors in order to facilitate the study.

After several organizational meetings with interested personnel from the Alliance-affiliated universities, a project research team was established. As requested by the Chancellor, none of these individuals had ever been an employee of the New York City Board of Education, although some had served as consultants.

In order to translate the general objectives of the project into more concrete activities, a pilot study was conducted in eight schools. Each member of the research team visited at least one school. Among these institutions were five comprehensive high schools, one comprehensive junior high school, one alternative school and one vocational school.

Based on the pilot visitations and a number of interviews with various Board personnel, an extensive and detailed interview schedule was developed, which ensured a certain degree of uniformity in data gathering among the members of the project team. The schedule covered the major topics, dealing with the broader area of pupil accounting and attendance, record keeping, and identification of at-risk students.

After additional Board interviews, it was decided that the study team would also interview the principal, assistant principal for pupil personnel services, attendance coordinator, and attendance secretary in selected high schools. Moreover, contact would be established with the attendance teacher assigned to the school, as well as any other personnel who might be helpful in establishing the procedures and practices currently employed in the school.

A sample of eleven schools was then selected for formal visitations. In order to accomplish objectives of the the project as well as for the purpose of comparative consistency, these eleven schools were all comprehensive, zoned high schools. Among them, there was at least one with a high dropout rate and another with a low dropout rate from each of the five boroughs, excluding Staten Island. Because there was so little difference in the dropout rates of the schools on Staten Island, only one school was selected. The high schools were chosen on the basis of their dropout rates as given in Board of Education reports.

Concurrent with the above activities, one member of the project team was given the responsibility of conducting a study comparing NYCBE procedures with those of five other large metropolitan school districts. This involved determining dropout definitions and identification procedures, as well as the techniques employed for computing dropout rates within other districts.

Report Organization

The full report is organized in three parts. Part One provides a summary of data obtained (through observations and interviews) from the high school visitations. It reports the findings on pupil accounting and attendance procedures across high schools and in a thorough study of one Manhattan high school. It includes information on attendance; admissions and discharge procedures; criteria for determining absences, truancy and suspensions; factors for identifying at-risk students; and the availability of an automated or manual student accounting system. Each section concludes with a number of findings and/or recommendations.

Part Two deals with a comparative study of schools with high and low dropout rates in three boroughs. Two schools, one with a high and one with a low dropout rate, in the boroughs of the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn were visited. Comparisons were made to determine similarities and differences among the school pairs on a number of factors affecting their the ability to deal with at-risk students and dropouts.

Part Three provides a comparison of dropout definitions and the procedures for monitoring dropout rates in New York City and five other large metropolitan school districts. It includes data from Miami, Boston, San Diego, Los Angeles, and Chicago as well as New York City. The other school districts were chosen on the basis of their having characteristics and problems similar to those of New York, such as large minority student populations, transient and mobile populations and populations with limited proficiency in English.

As the study progressed, it became evident to the project staff that a substantial improvement cannot occur with the dropout problem in New York City high schools without an infusion of personnel and funds in order to give at-risk students or potential dropouts individual attention. Without such a boost, the dropout issue will remain merely one of finding new ways to count those falling by the wayside. Schools with high dropout rates cannot be expected to function with the same ancillary staff and the same budgets as those with low numbers of dropouts. While the project staff observed a certain degree of creative administration in both high and low dropout schools as they attempted to deal with the dropout problem, it is not reasonable to expect a school administration to divert resources from students who attend school willingly and eagerly in order to serve truants and potential dropouts who participate only sporadically. That notwithstanding, it is precisely those truants who are so direly in need of early identification and special attention.

Finally, as mentioned previously, an addendum to this report is included in Appendix H summarizing the findings from a comprehensive survey of all of the public high schools in the NYC system. This survey was conducted, in part, to corroborate the findings of the school visitations conducted in the eleven high

schools, as discussed in Part One of the report.

Recommendations

Recommendations have been organized in the same categories as those outlined in the full report. Each recommendation is based on the project team's observations or discussions with the school personnel during the visits. In addition each recommendation has been referenced with a page number to the discussion in the full report.

Attendance Procedures

1. Implement procedures in all schools to create a uniform system for taking attendance, making home telephone calls, creating absentee lists and cutting lists and reporting pupil accounting information. Currently, at least four different methods of maintaining student accounting information are employed in the high schools. In addition all attendance reports, including the Office of Student Information Services (OSIS) reports, should be computerized and integrated so that the verification of forms and reports need not be done manually. (p.16)
2. Establish uniform guidelines for all schools to determine the number of absences and/or class cuts before a TELSOL call is made to the home. Also, if the high schools continue to use the University Applications Processing Center (UAPC), then a computer interface should be developed between UAPC and the TELSOL machines in order to eliminate the manual entry of student's phone numbers. (p.16)
3. Increase the attendance requirements for students to remain on the register. If a student would be dropped from the register after ten days of consecutive absence, thus jeopardizing his/her welfare status, the parent or guardian might be more diligent in working to keep the student in school. (pp. 16-17)
4. The fact that there are many parents who speak little or no English must be recognized. All TELSOL messages should be recorded in the languages of minorities represented in the student population. (pp. 17, 50)
5. Standardize the designation of a Long Term Absentee (LTA) across all schools. Currently, this definition can range from fifteen days to a month of consecutive absences. (p. 17)
6. Establish a Board-developed uniform ratio for staff and time assignment to the attendance office in each school. This formula should take into consideration the number of at-risk

students, the dropout rate, the absentee rate, and the proportion of problem populations in the school. (p. 17)

7. Develop a job description and procedural manual for each position in the attendance office in order to develop uniform procedures across schools. (p. 17)
8. Develop and maintain an ongoing training program with periodic refresher sessions for all attendance office staff.(p.17)
9. The position of attendance coordinator should be standardized across schools. In most cases, the incumbent is a teacher who is released from teaching to supervise the attendance office. A large variation was found in their duties and responsibilities, as well as in their training and experience. Some schools had more than one person performing this function leading to inconsistent procedures and a lack of personal responsibility for the job. There did not appear to be a relation between the size of the school or the magnitude of attendance problems and the amount of time assigned to this function. Also, the attendance coordinator should be concerned primarily with the social service needs of students, not record keeping, as was the case in some of the high dropout schools. (pp. 17, 50)
10. Both attendance teachers and family paraprofessionals visit to absentees' homes, seemingly independent of each other. The attendance teacher tries to find list-notice no-shows and LTAs, while the family paraprofessional attempts to prevent the occasional absentee from becoming a truant. The efficiency of this division of labor is questionable and it should be reconsidered in the interest of avoiding duplication of efforts. (p. 50)

Admissions and Discharges

11. If over-the-counter (walk-in) registrants cannot be equalized across schools, then more staff should be provided to those schools that consistently have large numbers of walk-ins during the early part of the school year. (p. 21)
12. There is a pressing need to establish and maintain a better network of communication among alternative educational programs in NYC in order to reduce the number of students categorized as "not found," and ultimately counted as dropouts. (p. 22)
13. The communications between the high schools and the Office of Student Information Services (OSIS) should be streamlined. At present the delay in transferring students and the difficulty in correcting errors and making changes in the discharge codes makes it difficult to obtain an accurate determination of enrollments, absences, or dropouts. (p. 22)

14. Procedures should be established with the State Education Department to obtain lists of students who have completed Graduate Education Diploma (GED) programs so that this information can be entered in the OSIS file and the student not carried as a dropout. (p. 22)

Absences, Truancy and Suspensions

15. Establish a uniform number of days absent before a student is designated a dropout. Currently, wide variations exist between low and high dropout rate schools. These differences may have some effect on the computation of accurate dropout statistics. They are also an obstacle that must be overcome if there is to be uniform and fair treatment of at-risk students. (p. 24)
16. Establish a consistent policy for all high schools on the designation of students who return to the Caribbean for frequent and extended visits. (p. 25)
17. Remove the names of chronically truant students from the list for daily TELSOL calls. These students need special attention, such as personal telephone calls to their parents, not a recorded message a few times each month. (p. 41)

Automated or Manual Student Accounting System

18. A standardized automated system is needed to maintain student accounting and attendance information. The project staff feels that this is one of the most serious problems facing the Board in general and individual high schools in particular. As indicated above, at least four different student accounting systems are currently in use. In some cases, a computerized (somewhat obsolete) system (UAPC) coexists with a manual backup system. To compound this problem, the OSIS system is imposed also on the schools. Thus, school attendance personnel are required to maintain multiple records in order to serve the various data recording requirements of each system. In the interim, the information provided by UAPC reports should be standardized to conform to the information required by OSIS and other Central Board reports. (pp. 27, 50)

Identification of At-Risk Students

19. Establish classes uniformly in all schools (similar to the AIDP schools) for students designated as LTAs or identified as being at-risk. These classes should provide special attention and remediation for these students who undoubtedly need additional tutelage in their academic subjects. In view of

this, extra support and resources should go to schools with high dropout rates. (p. 29)

Comparisons Across Six City School Districts

20. There is no consistency across districts as to which codes signify a dropout. Consequently, an individual identified as a dropout in one district might not be considered one in another district. Also, school districts have different means of determining the base upon which the dropout rates are computed. For example, some districts include special education students while others do not. This variability makes comparison of dropout rates across districts difficult or virtually impossible. (p. 52)
21. Formulas used to calculate dropout rates also vary. Essentially, two methods are used--a cross-sectional rate and a technique that follows student cohorts, usually over four years. Each method has advantages, but the information provided is different and cannot be compared across districts. (p. 53)
22. The quality of data reported by schools concerning dropout statistics is not consistent and uniform across districts. Intentional misreporting and mis-coding of attendance and dropout data was found in at least one district. (p. 53)
23. The dropout rates for overage students are extremely high, no matter what other characteristics the individual student may possess. In some districts, these rates reached almost 75%. Since being overage in school is usually the result of district grade retention and promotion policies, this finding suggests that these policies need careful consideration. (p. 54)

General

24. Finally, some Board personnel felt that one of the major problems with pupil accounting and attendance procedures, which had serious consequences for the monitoring of at-risk students, resulted from the separation of the homeroom and subject area teachers from the process. These teachers have been removed from primary responsibility for attendance--related activities. The argument is that students and parents respond best to homeroom and subject teachers who give grades. Removing them from the monitoring process eliminates an important form of in--school leverage for obtaining student and parent response to attendance--related problems. (p. 30)

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PROJECT STAFF

**PROJECT
CO-DIRECTORS**

Lloyd Bishop
Professor of Education
New York University

Deborah Inman
Professor of Education
New York University

**PROJECT
CONSULTANTS**

Floyd M. Hammack
Professor of Educational Sociology
New York University

Eve Hochwald
Adjunct Professor of Sociology
CUNY, Queens College

William Irvin
Educational Consultant
The Irvin Company

Carl Steinhoff
Professor of Education
New York University

Deborah Trumbull
Professor of Education
St. Johns University

**RESEARCH
ASSOCIATES**

Peggy Ann Lane
New York University

Nancy Newlove
New York University

Mara Peets
New York University

INSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

In addition to the project staff and study team, several individuals served as institutional representatives from various Alliance-affiliated universities, as well as others that were interested in the study. These individuals acted as a steering and planning committee, along with the project staff, in the initial stages of the study.

Professor Joel Berger
College of Staten Island

Professor Zita Cantwell
Brooklyn College

Professor Charles Harrington
Teachers College
Columbia University

Professor Gary Natriello
Teachers College
Columbia University

Professor Deborah Ann Shanley
Medgar Evers College

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Arthur Auerbach
Superintendent in Charge of Operations
Division of High Schools

Sylvia Ballatt
Executive Director
Division of High Schools

Charlotte Frank
Executive Director
Curriculum and Instruction

Richard Guttenberg
Director
Office of Educational Assessment

Alexander Katz
Office of
Student Information Services

Diane May
Office of
Student Information Services

John Shoener
Manager
High School Evaluation Unit

Jody Spiro
Assistant to the Chancellor
Office of the Chancellor

Charles Troob
Planning and Management
Office of the Chancellor

GLOSSARY OF TECHNICAL TERMS

DAR	Daily Attendance Record
GED	Graduate Ed. on Diploma
LTA	Long Term Absence
LYFE	Living for the Young Family Through Education
NYCBE	New York City Board of Education
OSIS	Office of Student Information Services
PAR	Pupil Attendance Record
PINS	Pupil in Need of Supervision
PREP	Program to Raise Education Performance
SARK-ADM	Student Automated Record Keeping Administration
SOAR	Student Opportunity, Advancement and Retention
TELSOL	Automated home-school telephone system
UAPC	University Applications Processing Center

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INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Dropout Identification

Although the issue of dropouts has been a matter of concern for over a century, a uniform definition of a dropout and the uniform collection of data (see also Part Three of this report) used to increase the understanding of dropouts and evaluate dropout programs has yet to be established (Morrow, 1985). Unfortunately, Blough's statement from 1956 is still applicable today:

One is amazed and more than a little annoyed to realize that nearly 85 years later (since Harris's report in 1872) common terminology with exact meaning has not been adopted (p. 241).

Not only is there no common definition for the term dropout, but there is also no uniform method for collecting and reporting dropout data. Until these first steps are taken, inter-district sharing of program evaluations and judgments of school success with dropouts will be virtually impossible.

The problem of identifying and defining dropouts is especially overwhelming and complex in the New York City public schools. In order to place this problem in the proper context, some examples of typical issues identified by Board of Education personnel and statements found in various Board dropout reports are provided below:

1. Problems associated with students who are inaccurately designated as dropouts--for example:
 - a. Special education students who fulfill their program requirements but are not awarded a high school diploma.
 - b. Students who enter the military and earn a GED while in the service.
2. Students who enroll in outreach programs under the Division of Special Education.
3. Students who enroll in daytime alternative high schools.
4. Students who enroll in evening GED programs sponsored by school districts or local colleges (particularly those who enroll more than one year after their high school discharge date).
5. Students who leave New York City to attend high school in some other geographical area.
6. Non-resident U.S. citizen minors who enroll in New York City schools solely for the purpose of establishing residency to qualify for New York City public assistance.
7. Students who were identified in junior high school as being atrisk or potential dropouts, and have not yet reported to their assigned high schools.
8. Students who enroll in proprietary schools that grant GEDs in addition to their own specialized program offerings.

In attempting to identify and define a school dropout accurately, the categories listed above become even more critical when compared with the narrow and limited definition of a school dropout imposed on school districts by the New York State Department of Education:

A Dropout - any pupil who left your school prior to graduation for any reason except death, and to the best of your knowledge did not enter another school. Students dropping out more than once should be counted

only one time. Students enrolled in alternative high school equivalency preparation programs and other diploma-bearing programs are not to be considered dropouts.

The New York City Board of Education defines a dropout as follows:

Those students who left the school system in a given school year (1982-1983) and did not enter other educational settings leading to a high school diploma within the same year (NYCBE 1982-1983 Dropout Report, p. 2).

Regarding tracking problems, the Board of Education Dropout Reports states:

Once students leave day high schools as dropouts, the schools find it difficult to keep track of the further educational progress of these students. Generally speaking, if the student enrolls in another day high school there will be a request for records. However, programs which lead to the high school equivalency diploma do not require school records, and in some cases do not notify the old school that the student was admitted. Evening high schools do not notify day high schools that a student has enrolled. The State Education Department has no procedure for notifying school system when an equivalency diploma is awarded. (NYCBE 1982-1983 Dropout Report, p. 5).

Another problem results from the fact that evening high schools do not submit admission data to OSIS (Office of Student Information Services). This leads to inaccuracies because name verification is not possible. A survey of high schools led to the erroneous conclusion that 1260 discharged students had been attending evening high school (Report, p. 14). Even though they were enrolled in retrieval centers about 2,525 students were counted as dropouts because they had not been admitted by the end of the school year. A field audit would indicate the extent to which this large discrepancy represents incorrect reporting at

the discharging schools, or incorrect admissions reporting at the retrieval centers (NYCBE Dropout Report, p. 20).

Purpose of the Study

Because of the aforementioned problems of dropout identification and monitoring, the present study was developed in response to a request from the Chancellor's office. The major purpose of this study was to evaluate the process and procedures of the NYCBE involved in the definition, identification, tracking, and monitoring of potential high school student dropouts in New York City high schools.

In order to accomplish this objective and to identify weaknesses and inconsistencies in the procedures found in several selected high schools, particular attention was given to the pupil accounting system in high schools. This included such factors as the attendance record-keeping process; admissions and discharge procedures; criteria for determining absences, truancy, and suspensions; procedures for identifying the at-risk student; and other factors that affect the system's ability to identify, classify and monitor students who are or will become school dropouts.

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Part Three provides a comparison of dropout definitions and the procedures for monitoring dropout rates in New York City and five other large metropolitan school districts. It includes data from Miami, Boston, San Diego, Los Angeles, and Chicago as well as New York City. The other school districts were chosen on the basis of their having characteristics and problems similar to those of New York, such as large minority student populations, transient and mobile populations, and populations with limited proficiency in English.

Parts One through Three, the main sections of this report, are summaries of more detailed materials that can be found in Appendices D through G.

As the study progressed, it became evident to the project staff that a substantial improvement cannot occur with the dropout problem in New York City high schools without an infusion of personnel and funds in order to give at-risk students or potential dropouts individual attention. Without such a boost, the dropout issue will remain merely one of finding new ways to count those falling by the wayside. Schools with high dropout rates cannot be expected to function with the same ancillary staff and

the same budgets as those with low numbers of dropouts. While the project staff observed a degree of creative administration in both high and low dropout schools as they attempted to deal with the problem, it is not reasonable to expect a school administration to divert resources from students who attend school willingly and eagerly in order to serve truants and potential dropouts who participate only sporadically. That notwithstanding, it is precisely those truants who are so direly in need of early identification and special attention.

As mentioned previously, an addendum to this report is included in Appendix H summarizing the findings from a comprehensive survey of all of the public high schools in the NYC System. This survey was conducted, in part, to corroborate the findings of the school visitations conducted in the eleven high schools, as discussed in Part One of the report.

Finally, at the time the study team made its school visitations and wrote this report, the attendance teachers were supervised by, and reported to, the Bureau of Attendance at the Central Board. Shortly thereafter, a reorganization at the Board placed the supervision of the attendance teachers in the Borough Superintendent's office at the High School Division. Because of the timing of the report, references concerning the attendance teachers reflect the former organization.

Part One

PUPIL ACCOUNTING AND ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

ANALYSIS ACROSS HIGH SCHOOLS

Introduction

The first section of Part One reports the findings of the study team based on their visitations to eleven comprehensive (zoned) high schools in the five boroughs. This included at least one high and one low performing school in each borough (except Staten Island). These schools were chosen on the basis of dropout statistics as reported by the Board of Education and comments and recommendations are based on findings across these schools. The recommendations in Part One deal primarily with five general areas of pupil accounting procedures: attendance procedures; admissions and discharges; absences, truancies and suspensions; identification of the at-risk student; and the availability of an automated accounting system.

The second section of Part One deals with similar material but these data are derived from a thorough analysis of one comprehensive (zoned) high school in Manhattan. Both sections of Part One summarize more detailed material contained in Appendix D and Appendix E respectively.

Attendance Procedures

The process of taking attendance, identifying and tracking truants and long term absentees (LTAs), and directing these

students to alternative educational programs or discharging them as dropouts is fairly similar in most New York City high schools. The variations that occur depend on the individual system each high school uses for tracking students--an internal computer, UAPC (University Applications Processing Center), or a manual method; whether the school has a large or small student body; whether it has a high or low dropout rate; and the number of available staff and the amount of resources.

The general attendance procedure is as follows. Roll books containing an attendance card for every student are picked up from the attendance office each morning by the homeroom teacher or a student assistant. Attendance is taken by the teachers. In schools with a two track system, attendance is taken at two different times. After marking absences both on the card and on a Daily Attendance Record (DAR) slip, the homeroom teacher or a student assistant returns the roll book and the DARs to the attendance office. In schools using the UAPC system, the roll book contains envelopes of IBM cards on which the teacher records lateness or absence. The IBM cards for the absent students are placed in envelopes and given to the attendance coordinator.

After attendance has been taken and roll books, DARs, and late slips returned to the attendance office, the information is then processed. Depending on which system is used, the data are recorded either manually at the school's internal computer or by feeding punch cards into the UAPC card reader. An attendance report identifying absentees is then generated and circulated throughout the school.

TELSOL (Home-School Telephone Machine)

The names of the day's absentees that the school selects for a TELSOL call are then transferred to the TELSOL machine. If there is no working interface device between UAPC and TELSOL, the paraprofessional must punch the absent students' names and phone numbers into TELSOL manually, obtaining the list of students to be called by going through the roll books. Although this eliminates making unnecessary TELSOL calls in cases where a legitimate excuse for a long term absence is noted, this laborious and time consuming method prevents the school from making the 300-400 daily calls that are possible with a more efficient system.

Not all absent students are called daily and each school sets its own priorities. Who is called is determined by the number of absences, the number of classes cut that term, or a request from the counselor. TELSOL wake-up calls are made based on a specific number of consecutive instances of lateness, which varies from school to school. TELSOL records indicate if a call is completed, if there is no answer, or if the phone has been disconnected.

At some schools, the TELSOL message is given in English only. Obviously, the impact of this message is lost for families that speak little or no English. However, most schools are aware of their student population's language needs, and there is no reason that this message could not be recorded in several languages.

Mail Notifications

Another way of notifying parents of their children's attendance problems is by mail. Attendance sheets are fed to the UAPC automated system, which not only produces daily attendance reports and cutting reports but also is programmed to send out postcards to parents, reporting student absence or class cutting. Parents of truants and LTAs (long term absentees) are also informed of their children's conduct in this way. Because the message is the same on every card it can be confusing to the recipient, especially since the postcards often come several days late and have no specific dates on them. A cross check of the UAPC generated absentee list is made by some schools, using a mark sense form filled out by each teacher. This sheet is fed into the UAPC system and a cut list is automatically generated, along with addressed postcards. The period of time between postcard mailings varies among schools.

Absences

The names of students flagged by UAPC or found by manually reviewing the rollbooks to have excessive absences (ranging from 15 days to an entire month depending upon the school) are given to the attendance coordinator, who in most cases designates them as LTAs. (In some schools, LTAs are withdrawn from regular classes and put into special LTA classes.)

Usually in the low dropout schools, the attendance coordinator will make every effort to establish contact and meet with the parents of students with absence problems before the case is turned over to the attendance teacher. The coordinator also

tries to identify students who are developing a significant pattern of absences and work with them individually before calling in their parents. This may also occur at a teacher's recommendation.

Students who have been absent are required to present an excuse. The typical procedure is as follows. A student absent for five days is required to bring a note from his/her parent or guardian to the attendance office. If absent for ten days, the student is required to come to the attendance office with either a doctor's note or accompanied by a parent. When a student accumulates 15 to 20 absences, his/her name is recorded in a Consecutive Register and a 407 Form is filled out. The student is assigned a number and referred to the attendance teacher who makes a home visit within a week or two. Technically, Form 407 should be issued whenever a student has been absent for five or more days. However, due to the number of excessively absent students in many NYC High Schools, this is not possible.

Classifying Dropouts

Usually, students with attendance problems are referred to the attendance teacher with a 407 Form sent by the attendance coordinator. This is called a first alert. If the problem persists, the second 407 Form calls for an automatic referral to the guidance counselor. If this is not productive, and the pupil is under the age of seventeen, the appropriate social agency (e.g., New York State Department of Social Services, New York City Department of Social Services, or Human Resources

Administration) is contacted. If the student is over seventeen, a letter is sent to the parents or guardian requesting that they and the student report for a conference at the school. If they do not respond, the parents are sent a letter informing them that the student has been discharged. At this point, the student is classified as a dropout. Students must be classified as dropouts before they can be referred to alternative programs.

Staffing (Attendance Office)

The attendance office is headed by the attendance coordinator, with some schools having more than one coordinator. At various schools, the job is defined somewhat differently. In one high dropout school, the attendance coordinator is the critical person who tracks attendance and coordinates all the reporting procedures; while at another school, the greatest share of the coordinator's work involves entering the daily attendance data into the UAPC system.

Of special importance is the role of the school secretary. Here again, there may be one or two in the office with varying titles and different responsibilities. The secretary may maintain the official register, process over-the-counter admissions, handle inter-class transfers (setting up paper classes of LTAs), keep track of list-notice no-shows (those list-notice admissions who never reported to school at all and so are not part of the official register), and prepare for the Board audits. Depending upon the school, the secretary's responsibilities can include one or more of these functions.

Paraprofessionals, school aides, and student assistants provide additional staff support in all high schools. Their numbers vary, as do their responsibilities, which include taking charge of TELSOL procedures; handling the initial procedures for readmitting students who have been absent; being responsible for keeping records of students who have cut class; sending out letters to social services; preparing truancy reports for the attendance teacher; working as a back up if the attendance coordinator is absent; and as translators for non-English speaking students or parents.

Attendance Teacher

Attendance teachers are supplemental staff at the attendance office. They are not supervised by the school principal but rather are under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Attendance. The time they spend at their assigned schools depends upon their caseloads and the needs of the individual schools. This time ranged in the sample schools from two hours twice a week to full-time.

Recommendations

1. Standardize and implement procedures in all schools to create a uniform system for taking attendance, making home telephone calls, creating absentee lists and cutting lists and reporting pupil accounting information.

Currently, at least four different methods of maintaining student accounting information are employed in the high schools. One standardized system, preferably a computer automated system, should be established and mandated by the Board for use in all high schools.

2. Establish uniform guidelines for all schools to determine the number of absences and/or class cuts before a TELSOL call is made to the home.
3. Increase the attendance requirements for students to remain on the register. If a student would be dropped from the register after ten days of consecutive absence, thus jeopardizing his welfare status, his parents or guardian might be more diligent in working to keep him in school.
4. Program the TELSOL machines to deliver bilingual messages in those schools where appropriate.
5. Standardize the designation of an LTA across all schools. Currently this definition can range from fifteen days to a month of consecutive absences.
6. Establish classes uniformly in all schools (especially high dropout schools) for students who are designated LTAs. These classes should provide special attention and remediation for these students who need additional tutelage in their academic subjects.
7. Establish a Board-developed uniform ratio for staff and time assignment to the attendance office in each school. This formula should take into consideration the number of at-risk students, the dropout rate, the absentee rate and the proportion of problem populations in the school.
8. Develop a job description and procedural manual for each position in the attendance office, and make these uniform across schools.
9. Provide an ongoing training program with periodic refresher sessions for all attendance office staff.
10. Standardize the role of attendance coordinator across all high schools. In most cases, the incumbent is a teacher who is released from teaching duties to supervise the attendance office. A large variation was found in their duties and responsibilities as well in as their training and experience. Some schools had more than one person performing this function, leading to inconsistent procedures and a lack of personal responsibility for the position. There did not appear to be a direct relation between the size of the school or the magnitude of attendance problems and the amount of time assigned to this function.

Admissions and Discharges**Admissions**

In New York City high schools the largest group of admissions comes from list-notices of students whose applications have been sent by feeder junior high schools to the Board of Education. These applications are processed starting in May, and by June the Board forwards this information to the high schools. This process seems to take longer each year as a result of a change in procedure that now precludes direct application by students to the high schools. There are also informal contacts with the guidance departments of feeder schools (formal contacts with the exchange of confidential information would be illegal) so that students likely to have attendance problems can be watched.

A second source of admissions are walk-ins or over-the-counter students who may wish to attend a high school to which they have not been assigned. The number of walk-ins depends upon various factors unique to each school, such as reputation, curriculum, or geographic location. While some schools have relatively few over-the-counter students (at the beginning of the semester perhaps 15 to 20 a day), others have a large walk-in population, resulting in additional pressure on the school admissions staff during registration. For example, one high school had 620 over-the-counter registrants between September and April. In another school, there were 741 walk-ins during September alone, and another 320 in February.

List-notice students are also carefully checked upon admission. Generally, the procedure is as follows. The admission-discharge secretary is primarily responsible for keeping the admission and discharge book. The student, accompanied by a parent or guardian, is sent to a guidance counselor who checks transfer papers, immunization records, and legal documents, and fills out the necessary forms for admission. Students returning from custodial institutions are evaluated by the assistant principal. Students without transfer papers are given placement exams by department chairmen, who recommend class and grade assignments. After students have met the enrollment requirements, they are sent to a program counselor with their admission form for schedule development. The admission-discharge secretary makes the proper entry in the admission-discharge book, and the information is sent to OSIS in the monthly report.

Readmission

The percentage of students who are discharged and readmitted to their home schools within the same year, or later, varies greatly from school to school. The schools interviewed did not seem to know the actual percentages and did not know how to obtain them. Any numbers suggested seem to be the projections of school officials based on their impressions of the problem.

Students can be discharged and readmitted more than once in the same academic year. The number of discharges are tallied monthly for the PAR report (Pupil Attendance Report) from the entries in the OSIS Book and are entered on the OSIS form. (Even though the OSIS book has replaced the 209 discharge book, some

schools still use the 209 book.) At the same time, the school reports the numbers and types of admissions. There are three possible codes: new admission, readmission from a previous year, and readmission from the current year. Every readmission is assigned the appropriate code on the admission slip, which is sent to the Board. The Board then determines that there is a readmit, enabling OSIS to make the necessary adjustment in the discharge figures.

Discharges

Various school personnel are involved in the discharge process. While the school usually makes the discharge official (which occurs after the OSIS-101 Form has been received), the cases of those students to be discharged are first examined by one or more of the following staff members: the guidance counselor, attendance teacher or attendance coordinator. Of the 39 discharge codes, most schools use only the "over 17" or "not found" designations. Every month the discharge information is sent to the Board in the OSIS report.

Students under 17 who are out of the country with no known address cannot be discharged and are kept on the books. Students between 16 and 17 with special work papers, who are not legally required to be in school, are often difficult to track. These students may be waiting for work and may not bother to fill out the letter for the employer. Sometimes they work off the books and are paid less than minimum wage by employers who are not willing to sign any papers. The attendance teacher may visit

these students a number of times.

The discharge procedures call for an exit interview with parents, the student, and the assistant principal for guidance or a counselor. The discharge information is recorded on a form that is sent to the pupil accounting secretary, who transfers the information to a 407 Form and enters the appropriate exit code. The slips have codes other than 39 (the code for "over 17 and discharged with parental consent"), which may be changed, for example, to 30 (code for students enrolled in auxiliary services) if the school learns a student has received a GED. If this change occurs after the information is entered on a formal report sent to the Board, the school must follow a different procedure to correct the record.

During the exit interview, an effort is made to inform the student of alternative programs and to facilitate entry into one of these if interest is expressed. The interviewer contacts the alternative center to set up an appointment for the student. In one school, after a week the attendance coordinator called the center to ascertain whether the student was attending classes.

When a student is admitted or discharged, the roll book summary sheet is updated. A report to OSIS is submitted by each high school once each month. This is a copy of the official admissions and discharge book.

Recommendations

1. If over-the-counter (walk-in) registrants cannot be equalized across schools, then more staff should be provided to those schools that consistently have large numbers of walk-ins during the early part of the school year.

2. There is a pressing need to establish and maintain a standardized network of communication among alternative educational programs in order to reduce the number of students categorized as "not found" and ultimately counted as dropouts.
3. The communications between the schools and OSIS should be streamlined. At present, the delay in transferring students and the difficulty in correcting errors and making changes in the discharge codes makes it difficult to obtain an accurate determination of enrollments, absences, or dropouts.
4. Procedures should be established with the State Education Department to obtain lists of students who have completed GED programs so that this information can be entered in the OSIS file and the student not be carried as a dropout.

Absences, Truancy and Suspensions

Absences

The primary methods of dealing with absences are as follows:

(1) a call by TELSOL to the home of an absent student; (2) a postcard from the automated UAPC system; (3) a personal call to parents; (4) a visit to the home of the student; and (5) after a number of consecutive absences, a letter to the home requesting a conference. If there is no response, a second letter is sent stating that the student will be listed as a truant or discharged as a dropout.

Inconsistent policy across schools was also evident regarding students who take extended leaves to visit a Caribbean home. At one school, students who return to the Caribbean for a few weeks are kept on the register. At another school, decisions

regarding these students are made on each individual case. Some students are carried; others receive the code for unlawful detention if the parents deliberately allowed their children to go, knowing they would miss school. Students who inform the school that they will not be returning from the Caribbean cannot be discharged unless a new address is received.

Truancy

Among the schools visited, there appears to be a relationship between the number of absences allowed before a student is considered truant and that school's dropout rate. The higher the dropout rate, the greater the number of absences allowed, and vice versa. This number ranges from five to ten days in one low dropout school to an entire month in a high dropout school. Once the absence limit has been reached, the general practice is to fill out a truancy report and to contact the student's parents by phone and/or through home visits.

Frustration was reported with the way the courts now handle truancy. Changes in court proceedings in the 1970's have made it harder for the Bureau of Attendance to win cases, thereby discouraging them from going to court. For example, Board representatives are no longer allowed to present their cases in court but must instead wait to be asked to give evidence. If a truant student is under 15 1/2, a PIN's (Person in Need of Supervision) petition may be filed in Family Court. Students in PIN's proceedings are now represented by a lawyer, often from Legal Aid. (The opinion was expressed that they often appear to be more concerned

with winning the case than with the student's welfare.) The result is generally unproductive, with numerous court appearances made by the attendance teacher, often to no avail. By law, cases of educational neglect (a child kept out of school deliberately by an adult) are reported to an 800 number.

Suspensions

Suspension (in those schools which define its use) is a disciplinary action in which delinquent students are barred from attending school for a maximum of five days. In some situations, the student is allowed to return to the same school; in others, the student must seek admission to another school. At one high dropout school, principal-to-principal transfers are negotiated, in which suspended students of one school are sent to another. Thus, disciplinary problems are exchanged. The advantage is that suspended students cannot return to their old high school to make trouble with the same teachers and classmates. Another school has two types of suspension. One type requires that the student return to the school accompanied by a parent, while the other type (called a superintendent's suspension) allows the student to be admitted only to another school.

Recommendations

1. Establish a uniform number of days absent before a student is designated a dropout. Currently, wide variations exist between low and high dropout rate schools. These differences may have some effect on the computation of accurate dropout statistics.
2. Establish a consistent policy for all high schools on the designation of students who return to the Caribbean for frequent and extended visits.

Automated or Manual Student Accounting System

Methods of maintaining attendance records vary greatly in New York City high schools. According to OSIS records, at the time the study team was gathering data for this report, approximately 57 schools were using UAPC, 24 schools were using the Columbia system, 55 high schools were still keeping records manually, and two or three were experimenting with a charge card type of system.

UAPC

The majority of the schools surveyed reported that they used UAPC. There was overall satisfaction with the service provided, although several problems were mentioned: (1) inaccuracy of some UAPC generated data (in recording discharges and occasional failure to read some cards); (2) confusion about a monthly Attendance Honor Roll, which listed students with "0%" attendance as having "100%" attendance; and (3) disagreement with the Board on how to handle attendance taking when the UAPC system is down for several days (with the eventual need to generate attendance data manually).

In-house Computer

Only one school utilized an in-house computer system. Once a student's records are entered into its database, all subsequent records can be identified by pre-printed computer labels. This eliminated hand copying of information, saved time, and prevented possible clerical errors. Only one school reported using no

computerized attendance system whatsoever, but expressed the intention to enter into a contract with UAPC next year.

TELSOL

The majority of schools reporting utilize TELSOL. Problems encountered with this system include inability to handle the load of calls to absent students in one day, negligence on the part of teachers in writing the phone numbers of absent students on the appropriate forms, and the necessity of keying hundreds of telephone numbers into the system each day. Only the school with the in-house computer system was integrated with TELSOL, thus eliminating the daily keying of phone numbers.

OSIS

Instances of problems reported with OSIS include the following: (1) errors and/or omissions in OSIS reports; (2) too great a time lapse in transferring students; (3) no notification of alternative high school enrollments (with the exception of students who transfer to an in-house GED program); and (4) difficulty with error correction.

The majority of schools reported that the issuance of duplicate OSIS numbers is not a problem, and that when duplication does occur, it is easily remedied by following the OSIS procedure for retracting the new number and using the old one. The schools indicated that more errors are caused in the transcription of numbers by personnel than in the duplication of numbers. The new OSIS hotline now makes it easier to check problems with OSIS numbers.

Recommendations

1. The study team feels that one of the most serious problems facing the Board in general, and individual high schools in particular, is the lack of one uniform and standardized method of maintaining student accounting and attendance information. As indicated above, at least four different systems are currently in use. In some instances, a computerized system (UAPC) coexists with a manual (backup) system. To compound this problem, the OSIS system is imposed also on the schools. Thus, school personnel are required to maintain multiple records in order to service the various data recording requirements of each system.

The Board needs to move rapidly to develop one standardized automated system for all high schools that would consolidate the various methods of student accounting currently in use. The OSIS system does not meet this requirement, and only proves to be a duplication of record keeping for many schools.

2. In the interim, the Board should provide each high school with a microcomputer to be used for some pupil services.

Identification of At-Risk Students

The majority of schools identify at-risk students as those with excessive absences from the feeder schools during the previous year. Poor achievement and family problems may also be taken into consideration. At most of the schools reporting, these students are identified by the attendance coordinator.

Programs

Most schools in the sample had some type of program for the at-risk student. These included GED preparation classes and programs for students at a specific grade level. Some programs

are being developed, such as the SOAR program designed for hold-over tenth graders and the LYFE (Living for the Young Family through Education) Center, which provides daycare facilities while mothers are in school. In addition, there is the Serrano money supplementation for more counselors and reduced class sizes and the PREP (Program to Raise Educational Performance) program, which provides smaller remedial classes in basic skills, vocational training and a reduced student/counselor ratio. These and other holding-power programs are designed to try to "hold" the at-risk student in school.

At those schools having no special program for at-risk students, such students are assigned to a guidance counselor. One high dropout school gives its at-risk students remediation because their work is at least one or two years below grade level.

At-Risk Student Profile

Most at-risk students are generally identified in elementary or junior high school as poor achievers and absentees. These are the reasons most commonly given for excessive absenteeism: lack of supervision at home; parents from the Caribbean who allow their children to spend time in both places; lack of English language proficiency; lack of academic success; pregnancy; lack of daycare facilities; substance abuse; financial problems; greater value attached to a job than to education; being over-age for grade level; family problems; rebellion against overly strict parents; detention by authorities after commission of a felony; and inability to handle the relative freedom of high school in comparison to junior high.

One major problem group is pregnant teenagers on maternity leave. Both high and low dropout schools reported that they had difficulty in tracking and monitoring these students. In addition, high dropout schools experience difficulty with students who spend time both here and in the Caribbean and students who register in the public schools solely to obtain welfare benefits. It was indicated that students who wish to obtain welfare benefits are only required to attend school one day out of twenty.

Finally, three major problems were reported by schools regarding pupil accounting procedures: the lack of notification when students completed the GED; no notification when students transferred to non-public, non-city, or alternative schools; and the long delays in processing students with intra-district transfers, which result in pupils being enrolled (and counted) in two schools simultaneously.

Recommendations

1. Special remedial classes should be established in all high schools for students identified as being at-risk (similar to the AIDP schools). In particular, extra support should be given to the high dropout schools.

In one sense, this recommendation is ironic. Some years ago, alternative schools were established for students with special problems, such as poor attendance and poor academic achievement. However, many school personnel interviewed by the study team reported that these schools have established such difficult standards of admission that many at-risk youngsters are not accepted. It is clear that new programs (similar to the old alternative school concept) need to be established for these students.

2. Finally, some Board personnel felt that one of the biggest problems with pupil accounting and attendance resulted from the separation of the homeroom and subject area teachers from the process. These

teachers have been removed from primary responsibility for attendance-related activities such as the collection of rollbooks, phone calls to homes, visits to homes, etc., which are now performed by other school personnel.

The argument is that students and parents respond best to homeroom and subject teachers who give grades to students. Removing these teachers from the process eliminates an important form of in-school leverage for obtaining student and parent response to attendance-related problems.

ANALYSIS OF ONE HIGH SCHOOL

Introduction

One group of the study team was given the task of analyzing thoroughly the attendance and accounting procedures in one high school. The objective was to trace the attendance procedures from the beginning of a school day to its conclusion. Any staff who were part of the process were interviewed. The team was assigned a zoned, comprehensive high school in Manhattan with a high dropout rate and a large population of students with limited proficiency in English. The high school was described as having a population of 3,150 students, although in various interviews the number ranged from 2,800 to 3,500. As a zoned high school, it is required to accept any pupil living within its geographical area.

In a preliminary meeting, the Principal stated, "Dropout statistics are either dishonest or stupid because they are so simplistic....The kids we educate are more often the ones everyone else has dumped, and they perhaps deserve an education more than any other group in society." Asserting that the school attempts to track an attendance problem for as long as there appears any hope of the student returning, he said, "We try to do what is best for every kid, and see each kid as an individual. Even one dropout is a tragedy."

Homeroom

At this high school, attendance procedures are initiated at

7:00 am by the two attendance coordinators and their assistants. In the attendance office they prepare to deal with the great volume of paper that student aides and teachers will deliver to them after attendance is taken in homerooms between the second and third periods.

At 9:23 am, roll books are collected by student aides or teachers. The study team selected a ninth grade homeroom to observe. Over half the classroom seats were empty--mainly "cutters," the teacher explained. The teacher marked attendance information on the rollbook card and the Attendance Report (DAR) form, racing against the clock to complete the task. The teacher called out students' names as announcements were broadcast over the public address system at full volume. A student assistant returns the roll book and DAR sheet to the attendance office before going on to her third period class.

Security

The security division is part of the attendance process in that it intercepts those students who arrive late. Tardy students are requested to identify themselves at the front door by showing their program cards or giving their ID numbers; failing that, they are asked for their school-assigned IBM numbers. These late arrivals then sign a late pass, which is stamped by a security officer. The student gives half of the pass to his homeroom teacher, and security keeps the other half until 10:00 a.m., when the entire batch of late passes is sent to the attendance office to be recorded. On the average, 40 to 50 students come late each day.

According to security, an important attendance issue is the "in-school" dropout problem. These are students who check in for attendance but do not attend classes, or after going to a few classes, obtain a bathroom pass and wander around for the rest of the day. Many of these students loiter in the restrooms or spend the day in the cafeteria. Since lunch goes on from the third to the eighth period, it is difficult to identify and apprehend these students. Security notes that throughout the day there may be as many as 500 students who never return to class. It was not explained why a teacher would issue a bathroom pass day after day to a student who made a practice of not returning.

Another part of the attendance problem is the difficulty in disciplining the late students and "roamers." A security guard said, "Sometimes I bring a late kid or a cutter to a dean for discipline, but the dean doesn't have time to deal with the case because he is running off to teach a class. The kid gets away with something he shouldn't. Our deans need more help."

Attendance Office - Morning

At 9:40, six to eight workers gather in the outer room of the attendance office to help collect the roll books and DARS from the student assistants. At this time, the nurse's office also sends in any reports of attendance-related problems. Just after 10:00 a.m., the late passes arrive from security. Office workers correct the DARS, noting that some students who were thought to be absent were late instead. A staff assistant in charge of computer entry begins her work at the IBM 5251

terminal located in the inner office (this school has its own minicomputer), entering the information in the Key Daily Absence File. When she is finished, she places the DAR sheets and late passes in a large envelope and stores them in a file cabinet, ensuring that an original record may be produced if a student should need verification of school attendance. She then takes a blank cassette downstairs to the computer room to tape the absentee information for the daily calls of the TELSOL machine.

Computer Facility

In use from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily and in limited use on weekends, the 5251 computer is shared with two other local high schools. An IBM PC with an L-1000 tape machine is connected to the 5251. At approximately 12:30 p.m. daily, a list of absentees is compiled on the computer, called up on the IBM PC, and made into a tape cassette on the L-1000. This cassette of absentees is then taken back upstairs to the attendance office for use in the TELSOL machine. From this tape, the TELSOL will be programmed to place calls to particular families. An additional printout of total daily absentees by class sections, which is separate from the TELSOL tape, is run off on the 5251 computer and kept on file in the attendance office.

Information requested by attendance personnel is set for the daily TELSOL calls. A call is not placed to the home of every absentee. A typical tape includes students in the following categories:

1. Students who have not been called at all this month.
2. Students who have been called once this month.
3. Students who have been called twice this month.

It is unclear whether the parents of frequent truants receive three or more TELSOL calls per month.

TELSOL

"TELSOL was a terribly time-consuming procedure until we got our school computer involved in making its tapes," states an attendance coordinator. "TELSOL brought us out of the Stone Age." Without TELSOL, the school would be unable to make the 300-400 daily calls, a far greater number than any one person could make.

Around 1:00 p.m., the aide inserts the tape cassette of absentees into the TELSOL machine. At the same time, a list is printed for the attendance office files. The TELSOL machine then places calls to all designated homes until 9:30 p.m. The following morning, a list of "answered" calls is printed. An answered call is defined as one that has reached a person or activated an answering machine.

A bilingual aide plays back the tape, noting the responses beside each name on the printed list and determining whether the respondent is an "invalid receiver" (a child or someone unable to understand the message in English). The aide redials manually all calls requiring a follow-up. She speaks to parents personally or leaves a message if they are not home. (In May 1985, a bilingual message was initiated). The aide's notations are later filed along with the list of total calls made that day. A list of "no contacts" is periodically compiled, but it was not determined how long a student's TELSOL calls can go unanswered before the school takes action.

Attendance Office - Afternoon

Two secretaries and an aide are involved in the compilation of records required by the Board of Education. One secretary is in charge of admissions, and the other deals with discharges. An aide verifies OSIS reports.

The admissions secretary compiles the required monthly attendance reports for the Board, first using the class report on register and attendance to record daily homeroom attendance activity. At the end of each month, she compiles a Periodic Attendance Report (PAR), summarizing all attendance activity for that month. The admissions secretary and the principal sign the completed report, which is sent to OSIS.

OSIS (Office of Student Information Services)

"OSIS has to figure out a way to service us back," stated an attendance coordinator. At this high dropout school, the relationship with OSIS is mostly one of record verification or report generation, both of which are time consuming tasks. Attendance records are sent to OSIS monthly, and several detailed special reports are forwarded to them each year. During the visit, the OSIS aide is in the record room, checking the permanent record card of each student on whom OSIS has a query. Often, the aide has to check data in several places--current student cards, discharge cards, and roll books. The information she needs cannot always be obtained from the computer, and the OSIS information must be copied manually. It sometimes takes her three weeks to complete one report.

According to the attendance coordinator, OSIS sometimes makes admissions mistakes it will not correct. Instead, the school is required to fill out readmission reports on the students, even though the students have been in school and the school has accurately reported them all along.

Another burdensome task is the OSIS requirement that high schools follow up discharged students for the Central Board, even though the school has given the student his papers and OSIS number to take to the new school. School personnel feel that this tracking should be the responsibility of OSIS. "OSIS... should send monthly reports to the high schools regarding kids in GED and alternative programs so that we don't include them in our dropout statistics, but they have never done this," said the attendance coordinator.

Attendance Teacher

The attendance teacher at this high school is assigned to several other high schools as well. His caseload for this school is approximately 200 students per month. Since he is overburdened, he concentrates on ninth and tenth graders and other students with severe attendance problems. He may make four or five home visits each morning in any of the five boroughs from which the students are drawn. Reaching working parents during the day is a major problem. He always leaves a Bureau of Attendance form as verification that he has visited the home, and keeps careful records of the home situations he observes.

During the team visit, the attendance teacher returned from a morning visit with a 17-year-old truant whose elder brothers

were unaware of his absenteeism. The boy had been absent 86 days, unexcused, and the attendance teacher had decided to start discharge proceedings. He requested that the parents contact the school immediately. Later in the day, the attendance teacher spoke to the truant directly, who was shocked to learn he was in danger of being discharged. When asked the reason for his poor attendance, the boy replied that he was failing all his subjects. The attendance teacher offered to transfer him to an evening GED program, but the student expressed a desire to be allowed to remain in the high school.

The procedure for discharging students who are 17 years old or older with severe attendance problems requires progressive actions. It begins with a letter to the parents, requesting that they attend a scheduled conference at school with their child and the attendance coordinator. If parents ignore the warning of possible discharge noted in the letter and do not contact the school, a second letter is sent to advise them that the student has been discharged and suggest alternative settings in which the student may enroll.

According to the attendance teacher in this high school, the alternative schools have very stringent admission requirements and very rigid admission schedules, and are only willing to accept a small percentage of students who apply. They are reluctant, he says, to admit truants or students with limited proficiency in English, or those lagging behind their grade level. Only highly motivated students able to continue to attend

a day program are referred to these high schools. This practice excludes most students with attendance problems. Thus, it is unclear just how helpful a resource the alternative schools are, how often they are used, and how many students are accepted by them or the GED programs.

GED programs, on the other hand, are not available to these students until they are 17. By that time, their interest in school has waned and their self-confidence has decreased. It appears that many students with attendance problems cannot avail themselves of either of these programs and must seek help, if it is to be had, from other alternatives.

Discussion and Recommendations

Some conclusions and recommendations are given briefly below. See Appendix E for a more complete description of the attendance process as analyzed in one school and for more detailed observations and recommendations.

It was clear that the attendance personnel at this school worked diligently, in less than perfect conditions, and under demanding deadlines to complete the required daily and monthly tasks. It was apparent that the staff felt a genuine sense of responsibility for their work in spite of the frustrating conditions.

The security division maintained a very visible yet compassionate presence throughout the building. The building was clean and graffiti free, and students were orderly. However, the major

problem of "in-school" dropouts requires immediate attention.

The acquisition of a minicomputer has improved the school's capability to deal with attendance problems and the creative ways in which it is being used is a credit to the principal and the attendance staff. The innovation of linking the computer to the TELSOL system for immediate attendance retrieval should certainly be replicated by other schools.

In spite of the attendance personnel's concern for the students, however, their efforts are often undermined by the need to "process" the students. The question arises, "How can a high school balance the need to give each student every opportunity to remain in high school against the need to clear the school registers of truants and dropouts as mandated by the Central Board?" As one attendance coordinator explained, "We work to the letter of the law, and then we are criticized and labeled a high dropout school." Although the school principal regards even one dropout as a tragedy, there was a steady stream of discharges moving through the attendance office during the several days of observation and interviewing.

The attendance personnel indicated that once a dropout code is assigned, the home school is absolved of further responsibility for the student, and it is unclear just how many students ever enter any other New York City educational program. Without percentages available, the study team could not ascertain how many students over 17 had left the school system, enrolled in GED programs, or visited pregnancy or retrieval centers. Also, it could never be determined how many students under 17 were able to

transfer to alternative high schools where they could still receive a regular diploma, and where the class schedule is lighter, classes are smaller, and personal attention is greater.

A final observation is that there is a need for OSIS to play a greater role in information sharing. As a centralized computer bank, it should have the capability to follow up on dropouts and provide reports and information to individual schools. Below are three specific suggestions based on observations in this Manhattan high school, selected from several recommendations to be found in Appendix E.

1. Achieve fuller computerized integration of all attendance reporting, including the OSIS reports, so that forms and verification reports need not be filled out or checked manually. This can be achieved by developing "boilerplates" of all NYC forms and filling them in on the computer terminal, or by calling up students' files and printing them out to verify OSIS data.
2. Remove the names of chronically truant students from the list for daily TELSOL calls. These students need special attention such as personal telephone calls to their parents, not a recorded message a few times each month. Not only would this facilitate earlier identification of these students, it would also promote early familial awareness of the truancy.
3. Post security personnel at the cafeteria doors during lunch periods to check students' schedules as they enter the room and clear the cafeteria of all students at the end of each period. These or similar measures would discourage use of the cafeteria as a lounge for the "in-school" dropouts.

Part Two

COMPARISON OF HIGH AND LOW DROPOUT SCHOOLS
IN THREE BOROUGHES

In an effort to confirm the findings of Part One, the data collected from the high schools were analyzed by making comparisons of schools with high and low dropout rates in each of three boroughs (The Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens). Initially, a comparison was to have been made between schools in each of the five boroughs. However, in selecting schools for this study, the data provided in the Board of Education Directory of High Schools and the Board's report of dropout rates did not indicate that there were comprehensive, zoned high schools in the Boroughs of Manhattan or Staten Island with sufficient contrasts in their dropout rates to be analyzed.

The reasons for this was that in Staten Island, all of the schools had approximately the same dropout rate, so there were no schools that could be separated into meaningful high and low dropout rate categories. In Manhattan, because there are so many specialized high schools, it was difficult to find a comprehensive high school with a low dropout rate that was comparable with the high dropout rate school. In fact, the only comprehensive high school that had a low dropout rate presently has an all female enrollment. It was obvious that the student body of the school with the high dropout rate was not similar to that of the school with the low dropout rate. As a result, specific compari-

sons between schools with high and low dropout rates were only made in the boroughs of the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens.

The contrast among schools with high and low dropout rates was striking. Generally, high dropout schools were characterized by a highly mobile and transient student population. In those schools visited, this was attributed to a significant extent to a large Hispanic population. Also, some students attend school only to obtain the face-to-face letter required to qualify for welfare benefits. Low dropout schools, on the other hand, were characterized by a much more stable population.

The findings reported in this section are organized similarly to those in Part One: attendance procedures; admissions and discharge procedures; absences, truancy and suspensions; automated or manual student accounting systems; and identification of at-risk students.

Attendance Procedures

Generally, personnel of the attendance offices at schools with high dropout rates have more responsibilities than their counterpart at the schools with low dropout rates. The high dropout schools are usually significantly larger than the low dropout schools, and many more of their students are absent each day. The volume of data schools with high dropout rates must process daily is overwhelming. As a result, the staff at these schools are primarily concerned with keeping the records in order and making sure the figures balance for the auditors. At times, an apparent disinterest in student welfare results from having to deal with so many students who are not interested in education or

are enrolled in school primarily to qualify for welfare assistance.

Many factors contribute to the overburden of the attendance office of high dropout schools. First, fewer staff members are assigned to the attendance offices of these institutions than there are in the low dropout schools, despite the fact that the high dropout schools usually have larger student populations. Second, the attendance teachers at the high dropout schools are assigned a greater caseload than are their counterparts in the low dropout schools, primarily because more students are absent from the former institutions. Third, more duties are assigned to each staff member at the high dropout schools. Even when there is additional personnel, the task of establishing rapport with students, controlling their movement, trying to establish a positive feeling for the school, and maintaining security is far more difficult with a larger student population than with a smaller one. Interestingly, the high dropout schools tended to have larger student bodies. For example, the high dropout school in the Bronx had an enrollment of about 3,574 students, while the low dropout school had 2,599. In Queens, the high dropout school had 4,275, and the low dropout school had 2,400. (Note: this observation may be valid for the schools in the study, but it may not be true necessarily for the entire system.)

Admissions and Discharges

The largest number of new admissions in all schools come from list-notice applications from their respective feeder

schools. While both high and low dropout schools have a significant number of over-the-counter admissions, the schools with a high dropout rate have proportionately more walk-in admissions than those with lower dropout rates. This is probably related to the more transient character of the student body at schools with high dropout rates. There is a sharp contrast between the high and low dropout schools in the number of discharges made annually. Again, this is probably indicative of the student populations rather than of any significant difference in the admission and discharge procedures.

Absences, Truancy and Procedures

The procedures dealing with students with high absences, suspensions, and truancy varied somewhat among the schools. For example, one school may file a truancy report after a student has accumulated fifteen absences, while another may wait until after twenty absences. The enforcement of various procedures depends in many instances upon the currency of record keeping and the load of the attendance teacher. The load and conscientiousness of the attendance coordinator also contributes to whether one takes the initiative and contacts a student who has been out of school for fewer than ten days. This occurred most often in the schools with low dropout rates.

Many schools, both those with high and low dropout rates, used TELSOL to notify parents of their children's absences. Most schools had the same complaint about TELSOL: the telephone numbers of every home to be called had to be keyed in daily. This is particularly time-consuming for the schools with the high

dropout rates. With hundreds of calls to be made many parents never called.

Automated or Manual Student Accounting System

At the time of the field visits, all the schools but one used UAPC. The one exception was scheduled to begin using the UAPC system in September 1985. The level of sophistication of UAPC use varied among the schools depending upon staff understanding of the system. Regardless of the dropout rate of the school there was dissatisfaction with UAPC because it did not generate all the data required for OSIS reports, thereby necessitating the transfer of information manually. Also, some of the schools with high dropout rates indicated that the UAPC system does not meet their processing needs at peak times. Schools with low dropout rates did not identify this as a problem.

Identification of At-Risk Students

As stated above, the difference in student population is responsible for the difference between schools with high and low dropout rates. Students at schools with low dropout rates are less likely to be transients than those at schools with high dropout rates.

Most schools identify at-risk students similarly. They include in this category entering students who have been absent twenty-five days or more the previous year, pregnant girls, and students approaching, or over, seventeen who do not have nearly the number of credits required to graduate. Many schools have PREP programs and special classes for holdover students. With

the current emphasis on high school dropouts, many schools are planning on new programs, such as LYFE (in-house child care) centers, to meet special needs of the at-risk student.

Conclusions and Recommendations

It is apparent that schools with high absence rates and transient student populations cannot employ the same procedures and function with the same personnel allotments as schools with substantially lower absence rates and a stable student population. At many schools with high dropout rates the personnel must constantly strive to overcome chaotic working conditions. Naturally, in those schools, additional space and more trained staff would be beneficial.

It appeared that most mistakes in OSIS student identification numbers could be eliminated at both high and low dropout schools if the numbers were not copied by hand. A possible solution would be to issue OSIS cards with the numbers embossed as they are on a credit card so that they could be stamped on documents.

Of course, one comprehensive district-wide computer system would solve the majority of these problems.

Every September, both the high and low dropout rate schools have to account for the large number of list-notice admissions who never attend school. Evidently, some students are transferred from the feeder junior high schools even though their

status is uncertain. An alternative procedure that would route them elsewhere or retain their records at the school attended previously would decrease high school programming and pupil accounting tasks.

At present, students entering high school can apply to as many as fifteen educational option programs. That notwithstanding, each high school must process every application it receives. Since the better qualified students will be accepted for more than one program, each school now over admits in order to ensure full enrollment. This procedure needs streamlining. Either students should be limited the number of applications they can make, or the applications could be screened centrally to prevent duplication of efforts. Another possibility would be to have two rounds of admissions, the first in November and the second in March to allocate the remaining places.

Regarding discharge procedures, in many schools with high dropout rates, the pupil-accounting secretaries do not always keep track of how many times they discharge an individual student. By means of a code on one of the Board's forms (209 Form) they do notify OSIS whether the student has been readmitted from the current year or the previous one, but they do not keep an in-house tally. This procedure has several flaws that should be addressed. First, an accurate dropout rate now depends on whether OSIS adjusts the discharge rate according to the numbers of readmissions. At present, there is no internal check to determine whether this has been done. Second, no provision has been made to notify OSIS if a student has been readmitted more

than once during the current school year. This could be accomplished simply by adding another code. Third, even if OSIS makes the correct adjustments, it might be advantageous for the school to have a parallel procedure. As schools have some discretion in how they set up holding power programs, they need to be able to identify their target population accurately.

To some extent, the dropout rate increase has been caused by the welfare regulations requiring the submission of face-to-face letters to caseworkers. Presently, the school is responsible for issuing these letters. Two changes in this procedure are suggested. First, if the monthly attendance requirement to obtain a letter is increased, then students who enroll solely to obtain letters would not be continually transferred in and out of LTA classes and in and out of the attendance teachers' caseload. Second, to reduce disruption in the schools face-to-face letters might be issued elsewhere. Perhaps the Board of Education could make attendance rosters available to local welfare centers.

The findings of this part of the study support the following specific recommendations:

1. If it is not feasible to reduce the size of the high schools, then smaller administrative units should be established in each building to personalize the pupil accounting and pupil accountability processes.
2. The attendance coordinator should be concerned primarily with the social service needs of the students, not record keeping, as was the case in some of the high dropout schools.
3. Both attendance teachers and family paraprofessionals visit absentees' homes, seemingly independent of one another. The attendance teacher tries to find list-notice no-shows and LTAs, while the family paraprofessional attempts to prevent the occasional absentee from becoming a truant. The

efficiency of this division of labor is questionable, and it should be reconsidered in the interest of avoiding duplication of efforts.

4. The fact that there are many parents who speak little or no English must be recognized. All TELSOL messages should be recorded in the languages of minorities represented in the student population.
5. Unnecessary paperwork should be eliminated, so time can be spent more effectively. Much of this is generated by the several types of student accounting systems utilized in the high schools--manual, UAPC, and OSIS.
6. The information provided by UAPC reports should be standardized to conform to the information required by OSIS and other Central Board reports.
7. If the high schools are going to continue to use UAPC, then a computer interface should be developed between UAPC and TELSOL to eliminate the daily manual entry of home phone numbers.
8. Channels of communication should be established between the high schools and the various alternative educational programs so that the high schools will not mistakenly consider students as dropouts.
9. A system must be established to notify schools when students pass.
10. One centralized comprehensive computer system must be implemented. With modern technology there is no reason that this could not be started immediately.

Part Three

COMPARISON OF SIX LARGE CITY SCHOOL SYSTEMS

Dropout Reports:

An Analysis of Definitions and Procedures

With the increased demand for in school accountability and appropriate measures of school performance, it is important to examine closely school district reports of completion and dropout rates. National data are of little help in this regard because they are gathered from data generated by each district and do not take into account in- and out-migration, among other factors.

Part Three of this report relates how six large city school districts define dropouts, process information, and arrive at rates of completion. The data reviewed are taken from reports on dropouts prepared by each district. Although the reports vary in detail, each was professionally prepared. The districts examined were in Boston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, San Diego and Chicago. These cities were chosen because they are large metropolitan centers, contain heterogeneous student populations, and have high proportions of students who are recent migrants or the children of recent immigrants. They are not necessarily representative of all school districts throughout the country, but the problems they encounter and the findings they provide are certainly common. This portion of the study indicates what data districts can provide and reveals ways of improving the collection and use of dropout statistics.

Differences in Dropout Definitions

All pupil accounting systems begin at the school building level, where individual student records are developed and maintained. When a student formally withdraws from school, the reason for leaving is usually noted in the student's file. These notations, which are often encoded, indicate whether the student transferred to another school or district, entered the military, or began working fulltime. These codes are standard throughout each district, and records are transferred periodically to a central office for system-wide processing.

Not all codes indicate a dropout. For example, in some districts the notation that a student has transferred to a business or trade school is not considered a dropout code; yet in other districts, it is. There is no consistency across districts as to which codes signify a dropout, even though the most commonly used code is "not found" or the equivalent. Consequently, an individual identified as a dropout in one district might not be considered one in another district.

Furthermore, school districts have different means of determining the base upon which the dropout rates are computed. Some districts include special education students, while others do not. In some districts, only those students who have left after reaching the legal age for doing so are included; underage dropouts are simply not counted. Districts do not use the same number of absences to classify a student as a dropout. Some districts report data only for those students who have enrolled in high school; those who dropout in junior high school are not included

in the base. Again, this variability affects the individual rates reported by each district and makes comparison across districts difficult or virtually impossible.

The formulas used to calculate rates also vary. Essentially, two methods are used. A cross-sectional rate divides the number of dropouts in a single year by the total enrollment in the grade levels included. Other districts follow student cohorts, usually across the four years of secondary school. Each method has its advantages, but the information provided is different and, again, cannot be compared across districts.

Quality of Data Collected

Interviews with officials in several of the districts revealed an unanticipated problem with some of the accountability procedures. With increased pressure on schools to submit student-related data, the temptation arises to misreport attendance and dropout data. Of course the intentional miscoding of students who leave school or are long-term absentees can reduce the dropout rate. One example of this, detailed in Appendix G, involved a school that officially reported a dropout rate of 1.9%, when the actual rate calculated by the central office was 58.3%. School administrators should be alert to these possibilities while they attempt to design better reporting procedures.

Findings by School Districts

The specific findings for the six city districts are reported in detail in Appendix G and will not be repeated in this summary. However, one finding across all the city reports should

be mentioned. The dropout rates for overage students are extremely high, no matter what other characteristics the individual student may possess. In some districts, the rates for overage students reached almost 75%. Since being overage in school is usually the result of district grade retention and promotion policies, this finding suggests that these policies need careful consideration. The negative consequences (contributing to a larger dropout rate) may outweigh the academic benefits they are intended to provide.

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APPENDIX A

School of Education, Health, Nursing, and Arts Professions
Division of Education
Department of Organizational and Administrative Studies
Program in Educational Administration and Supervision
East Building, Suite 300
Washington Square
New York, N.Y. 10003
Telephone: (212) 598-2917

November 27, 1984

Dear Dean

As you may know, discussions have been underway among the Alliance, the Chancellor's office of the New York City Public Schools and various Alliance affiliated universities concerning the interest in and the need for a study of dropouts in the New York City Schools. Earlier this term, Dean Burnham offered to have NYU serve as the host institution for such a study and after discussions in September with the Chancellor and the Alliance, negotiations have been finalized for this project.

There are several purposes for this letter. First, to inform you that the dropout study is official as of November 1, 1984, and that funding has been established to allow the study to be conducted for a twelve-month period until October 31, 1985. Second, to communicate to you briefly concerning the nature and scope of this current study as requested by the Chancellor and as agreed to by the Alliance and project directors at NYU. The attached "Working Paper" indicates the current scope and direction for this study.

It is our understanding that Alliance affiliated universities should have the opportunity and hopefully the interest to be involved in projects that are sponsored and funded by the Alliance. Therefore, we are requesting that you identify individuals on your staff who might be interested in becoming involved in and who could provide expertise for this study. There are two primary needs. One is an individual to serve as an institutional representative who would participate on an ad hoc steering committee in order to provide direction and refinement to the conduct of the study, and second, is the need for other staff who would like to serve as consultants and have a more intense and direct involvement with the gathering, data analysis, and subsequent preparation of a final report.

We would appreciate receiving these names as soon as possible. The first steering committee meeting will be called prior to the Christmas holidays. We appreciate your cooperation in this project. Please forward names and telephone numbers to Professor Lloyd Bishop, New York University, East Building - Room 307, New York, NY 10003.

Sincerely,

Lloyd K. Bishop
Project Co-directors

Deborah Inman

cc. Claire Flom
Chancellor's Office

Appendix B

HIGH SCHOOL INTERVIEW/OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

Name of School: _____

Position of Interviewee: _____
(Asst. Principal/Attendance Coordinator, Attendance Teacher,
Attendance Secretary)

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

(Record Keeping from Homeroom to Central Board)

- Describe process (timeline, etc.).
- Forms used.
- Personnel involved (titles), full-time, part-time, students.
- Internal audit system?
- Computerized or manual system?
- Which accounting system used (UAPC, OSIS)?
- Paperwork load - manageable, unmanageable?
- Where is official register compiled?

ADMISSIONS AND DISCHARGES

- How and when is discharge code added to record?
- How are exit interviews conducted, if they are?
- Definitions and codes used.
- Describe the process including timeline.
- What forms are used?
- Personnel involved (titles).
- Computerized or manual system?
- Internal audit system?
- Paperwork load - manageable or unmanageable?
- Do your dropout statistics agree with Central Board?
- How do you count "reentry students"?
- Who assigns dropout codes?
- How are transfer students counted?
- What mediates against clearing dropouts from the official register?
- Is there a backlog of dropout cases?
- Backlog of unresolved cases?
- How old are the cases (one month, six months, a year)?
- Are you being notified of alternative school and evening high

school enrollees?

- How do you track "no-shows"?
- How do you track "drop-ins"?
- Describe your readmissions process.

ABSENCES, TRUANCY AND SUSPENSIONS

- Define terms.
- Describe process (timeline, etc.)
- Personnel involved (titles)
- Internal audit system?
- Computerized or manual system?
- Paperwork load - manageable or unmanageable?
- How long are visits home by Caribbean students designated?
- What are cut-off times for each category (from one category to next to dropout)?
- How are families contacted?
- What is suspension/readmission process?

AUTOMATED OR MANUAL STUDENT ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS

- Multiple OSIS numbers for one student.
- Assignment of new OSIS numbers to new students.
- Is "BEDS" system now recording all alternative high school enrollments?
- Are students enrolled in more than one high school simultaneously?
- When student selects one high school how and when is his name removed from the other schools?
- How often do you and OSIS report to one another?
- Who in your school does this?
- Do you have the TELSOL system?
- Do you still use the UAPC system?

IDENTIFICATION OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

- How are they targeted at your school?
- Who is responsible for the ID's, tracking (enrollment and follow-up)?
- What is availability of in-house special programs for them?
- What generalizations can you make about the students who drop out of your school? (example: low achievers, low SES, behavior problems, ethnicity, etc.)

SPECIFIC PROBLEM POPULATIONS

- Students who board with non-family.
- Students who enroll primarily to qualify for public assistance benefits.
- Surname confusion (various spellings/various names).
- Counting of "reentry" students.
- Counting of students at retrieval centers.
- Notification of GED diplomas awarded to students.
- Maternity leave students.
- Special Ed students.
- How are students who dropout several times counted?
- Other...

Appendix C

HIGH SCHOOLS VISITED BY PROJECT STAFF

PILOT SCHOOLS

Brooklyn:	Eastern District Linder Center	Comprehensive Alternative
Queens:	Ryan Hille John E H.S.	Comprehensive Comprehensive Comprehensive
The Bronx:	Evander Childs H.S. Jane Addams H.S.	Comprehensive Comprehensive
Manhattan:	Manhattan Vocational Technical Center	Vocational Vocational

SAMPLE HIGH SCHOOLS BY BOROUGH

Manhattan:	Brandeis Washington Irving	High dropout rate Low dropout rate
The Bronx:	Theodore Roosevelt Harry S. Truman	High dropout rate Low dropout rate
Brooklyn:	John Jay Thomas Jefferson Tilden	High dropout rate High dropout rate Low dropout rate
Staten Island:	Port Richmond	
Queens:	Franklin Lane Jamaica	High dropout rate Low dropout rate

Appendix D

PUPIL ACCOUNTING AND ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES
ANALYSIS ACROSS HIGH SCHOOLS

This appendix provides a more extensive report of findings which was prepared by the study team from visitations in several high and low dropout zoned comprehensive high schools in the five boroughs. This appendix parallels the summary material found in the first section of Part One. The appendix has been organized, similar to Part One, into the following five divisions:

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Appendix D1 | Attendance Procedures |
| Appendix D2 | Admissions and Discharges |
| Appendix D3 | Absences, Truancy and Suspensions |
| Appendix D4 | Automated or Manual Student Accounting Systems |
| Appendix D5 | Identification of At-Risk Students |

In order to reduce duplication costs, the remaining appendices (Appendices D, E, F and G) have been printed in condensed type and single spaced.

Appendix D1

Attendance Procedures

The process of taking attendance, identifying and tracking truants and LTAs, and directing these students to alternative educational programs or discharging them as dropouts is fairly similar in most New York City high schools. The variations that occur appear to depend on the system each high school uses for tracking (an internal computer, UAPC, or a manual method) and whether the school has a large or small student body, a high or low dropout rate, the number of staff assigned, the amount of resources available and other factors.

The general attendance procedure is as follows. Roll books containing an attendance card for every student are picked up from the attendance office each morning by the homeroom teacher or a student assistant. Attendance is taken by the teacher, usually between the second and third class periods. However, in one high dropout school, this is done after the first period, and in one low dropout school, because of a two track system, attendance is taken at two different times. After marking absences both on the card and on the Daily Attendance Record (DAR) slip, the homeroom teacher or student assistant returns the roll book and DARs to the attendance office.

In one high dropout school, teachers are overwhelmed by the task of writing down the phone numbers of hundreds of absentees. Unlike many other schools, this one is not yet automated, and unless the teacher manually records the phone numbers, these students will not receive a TELSOL call. Some teachers make a photocopy of a master list of their students and check off the phone numbers of those absent, while others are unable to hand in completed rosters due to time constraints.

In high schools using the UAPC system, the procedure is somewhat different. Of the participating schools, one high dropout and three low dropout schools use UAPC. At one high dropout school, each roll book contains envelopes of IBM cards on which the teacher records lateness or absence. The IBM cards for absent students are placed in envelopes and given to the attendance coordinator, and the roll books are returned to the attendance office by the teacher or a student by early afternoon. At one low dropout school, the homeroom teacher marks attendance in the roll book and then removes from a full deck of punch cards those cards of absent students and places them in a special pocket of the roll book. The book is then returned to the assistant principal's office, where it is picked up by the roll book secretary.

After attendance has been taken and roll books, DAR's, and late slips returned to the attendance office or another designated room, the information is processed either manually, by the school's internal computer, or by feeding punch cards into the UAPC card reader.

An attendance report identifying absentees is generated and circulated throughout the school as quickly as possible. A cutting list and a late

list may also be part of the report. Two schools—one with a high dropout rate using its own computer and one with a low dropout rate using UAPC—are both able to make these reports available as early as 12:00 noon.

TELSOL

The names of the day's absentees that the school selects for a TELSOL call are transferred to the TELSOL machine. How soon this transfer is made depends upon the school's system. If there is no working interface device between UAPC and TELSOL—for example, as in the case of a high dropout school—the paraprofessional must punch the phone numbers into TELSOL manually. She cannot use the UAPC daily attendance report to generate a list of students to be called because the report does not include the phone numbers of students. (She suspects there is a command that would produce such a list but she does not know it.) Instead, the paraprofessional obtains her list of students to be called by going through the roll books and copying the numbers. Each day she examines the roll books for one given class (e.g., the junior class) and finds that approximately 200 students should be called. She states that going through the roll books has the advantage of alerting her to a legitimate reason for a long term absence, thus making a TELSOL call unnecessary. Unfortunately, this laborious, time consuming method also prevents the school from making the 300-400 calls that are possible with an automated system.

Not all absent students are called, and each school has its own guidelines for who is. In one low dropout high school a TELSOL call to the home is made if a student misses one day of class. If students are late two days, they receive a TELSOL wake-up call. If the TELSOL call is not completed, or if the student is absent for a week, the attendance coordinator will try to call personally. At a high dropout high school, students are called when they have been absent for three consecutive days or when they are absent two days, present one day, and then are absent again. Students who are late two consecutive days receive TELSOL wake-up calls the next morning. TELSOL calls are also made if the student has excessive absences or has cut a large number of classes during the first part of the term. Students are also called at the counselor's request. Because each school has different priorities and time limitations, it is possible that older students with chronic attendance problems may not receive frequent TELSOL calls.

At a high dropout high school, the TELSOL message is in English and from the principal. This poses a problem for those who cannot understand English. If Spanish surnamed families were to be called automatically in Spanish, however, there is the possibility that some recipients would be insulted. Generally, it is thought that anyone answering the call will realize that it comes from the school and will phone the school for more information.

TELSOL records indicate whether the call is completed, if there is no answer, or if the phone has been disconnected. At this same high school the official teacher checks student phone numbers at the beginning of each term. The school spent \$800 on a Call Reverse Directory, which enables them to find the phone number at a particular address. Every morning the

TELSOL paraprofessional takes the calls of parents or guardians who have received TELSOL calls. If the TELSOL paraprofessional receives no call from the home after several attempts, the attendance teacher is notified.

Mail Notification

Another way of informing parents of their children's attendance problems is by mail. At a low dropout high school, attendance sheets are sent directly to the computer room and fed to the UAPC automated system. Not only does this produce daily attendance and cutting reports, but it also sends postcards to parents reporting a student's absence or cut.

When a student misses one day of class in the course of a week at a high dropout school, the UAPC system automatically sends a postcard to the home. Parents of truants and LTAs are also notified this way. Because there are so many students in these categories the school cannot afford first class mail. Therefore, bulk mail is used, with postcards being sent out every three weeks. Since the message is identical on all cards, it can be confusing, especially as the postcards often arrive too late and have no dates on them. At one low dropout school, a cross check of the UAPC generated absentee list is made every Friday by the teachers, who use a mark sense sheet for this purpose. This sheet is fed into the UAPC system and a cut list is generated automatically, along with addressed postcards. Although the cards are mailed weekly, there is a two week delay.

At another high dropout school, absence postcards are generated by the computer and mailed every two weeks. A card is sent by UAPC after the student has missed three classes. If this card is returned by mail, the coordinator sends a Do Not Admit Form (420) to the official class teacher. When the student returns, the teacher sends him to the attendance office to correct the address. In one low dropout school, if there is continued absence, the attendance coordinator will send two first class letters after having tried to reach the parent and student personally by phone.

Absences

At one low dropout school, UAPC flags on a monthly basis students who have been absent for 20 consecutive days. At a high dropout school, the pupil accounting secretaries go through the roll books by hand each month to find who has been absent all month long. Their names are given to the attendance coordinator, who in most cases designates them as LTAs. The pupil accounting secretaries then place these students in special LTA classes.

In another low dropout school, the attendance coordinator will make every effort to establish contact and meet with students and their parents in absence cases, either during or after school, to find out what is going on before turning the case over to the attendance teacher. Whenever possible, the coordinator goes through the roll books, calls students that seem to be developing a significant pattern of absenteeism and tries to work with them individually before calling in their parents. The coordinator will also call the home at a teacher's recommendation. Students who

have been absent a few days are required to present their excuse note to all teachers and then bring it to the attendance office, where it is filed. The roll books are supposed to indicate whether the student brought a note to explain the absence. LTAs are required to report to the attendance office each morning.

In another low dropout school, the procedure for dealing with students who cut classes is different. If someone suspects a student of cutting class, a form is given to the student to have all the teachers sign, indicating when the cut occurred. These forms are filed in the attendance office.

At one high dropout school, when a student has been referred to the attendance teacher, the attendance coordinator puts a red "T" on the roll book card. If the student is officially discharged later, the card is removed from the roll book and refiled in a special file so that that teacher does not continue to mark the student absent. If the student returns to school, he or she goes back to the original homeroom and the same card goes back into the roll book. For LTAs, the attendance coordinator keeps a "7X" register.

In another high dropout school, a student absent for five days is required to bring a note from a parent or guardian to the attendance office. After picking up a Readmit After Absence Form (25-1460/77-3725), the student takes it to all classes for teacher's signatures and returns it to the attendance office. If absent ten days, the student is required to come to the attendance office with either a doctor's note or a parent. When a student is absent for 15 to 20 days, the name is recorded in a consecutive register and a 407 Form is filled out, assigned a number, and given to the attendance teacher. Technically, the 407 Form should be issued whenever a student has been absent for five days, but this is impossible due to the number of students involved. Within a week or two, the attendance teacher makes a home visit, recording the student's number and the date of the visit in the consecutive register. Under normal circumstances, it can take over two months to process these cases.

At one high dropout school, due to recent staff changes, the attendance teacher is working on cases that were first referred in December. Few new referrals are being made until this backlog can be cleared away. The truancy report can be generated on a three-part form from the UAPC system, but the school's computer office is also running short of three-part computer paper. Since computer paper is furnished in allotments, the school cannot requisition any more, so the truancy reports must now be generated by hand on Form 407.

At this school, pupils who have been absent for a month are designated LTAs. LTAs are withdrawn from regular classes and put into special official classes. Students are classed as truants or put into the LTA classes on the basis of UAPC data, but the pupil accounting secretary has found that the roll books identify more students that should be considered truants or put in LTA classes than does the UAPC system. She mentioned that UAPC seemed less accurate than their own records and that sometimes it failed to read some cards. Last year at another low dropout school, UAPC made a significant error by listing students with zero attendance as

having "100%" attendance. At a third low dropout school, the pupil accounting secretary prepares the monthly attendance report using information obtained from summary lists in roll books, which the teachers amend daily. There has been some difficulty, she finds, with the UAPC system, which, according to her, does not always generate accurate attendance figures.

At one high dropout school, the pupil accounting secretary keeps an official register from which reports are drawn. This register is updated daily on the basis of admissions, discharges, and inter-class transfer information. She does this because she has found that the UAPC does not agree with the roll books or her records. She reports that UAPC seems especially inaccurate in recording discharges.

At another high dropout school, if students remain designated as "lost," they can be discharged from school. In these cases, the attendance teacher fills out half of the 407 Form and after a month checks with the school office to see if the student's records have been requested by another school. The attendance teacher does hold cases that were not located, or were located and could not return to school. No information was given on how long these cases are held.

Classifying Dropouts

At a low dropout school, students exhibiting attendance problems are referred to the attendance teacher by a 407 Form sent by the attendance coordinator. This is called a first alert. If the problem persists, the second 407 calls for an automatic referral to the guidance counselor. If this is not productive, and the student is under the age of seventeen, the appropriate social agency is notified. If the student is over seventeen with twenty or more consecutive days of absences, a letter is sent to the parents or guardian requesting that they and the student report to the school for a conference. If they do not respond within ten days, the parents are sent a letter informing them that the student has been discharged. At this point, the student is classified as a dropout. Students must be classified as dropouts before they can be referred to alternative programs.

At a high dropout school, students under the age of seventeen who have been absent for thirty consecutive days are listed in a truant book and referred to the attendance teacher. Students over the age of seventeen who are absent for thirty consecutive days are discharged and listed as dropouts.

OSIS

OSIS reporting procedures are similar in one high dropout high school in Manhattan and both of the low dropout high schools in Brooklyn in regard to the monthly and periodic reports. At a high dropout school, even when the in-house computer prints forms such as the "409 referrals" that are used interchangeably with those issued by the Board, the pre-printed computer forms follow the Board's format exactly.

At another low dropout school, as in the other schools, PAR (Pupil Attendance Registers) reports must be submitted on a monthly basis. The PARs require detailed information in specific categories: code 190 for the 9th grade, code 193 (PREP A), code 194 for the 10th grade, etc. Holdover classes and LTAs require separate accounting. The percentage of monthly attendance is reported excluding LTAs, with some figures required for these breakdowns coming from UAPC and other sources (e.g. Special Education, Co-op) computed manually.

The October 31 Reorganization Report, prepared at one school by the school secretary, is based on the October 31 Register. Every official class must be certified and reconciled. Two additional lists are also compiled: an "A" list of students absent the entire months of September and October and a "B" list of those absent the entire month of October only. Board auditors visit the school to audit this report.

The March 31 Reorganization Report, reflecting mid-year changes, is in the same form as the October 31 reconciliation. The "A" and "B" lists reflect February and March no-shows and March no-shows, respectively. This report is also audited. Intra-period Reports were initiated in 1984-85 and are produced in January and June.

At one high dropout school, the pupil accounting secretaries prepare the OSIS PAR reports, the October 31 and March 31 Reorganization Reports, and the OSIS Intra-period Reports. For example, as part of an attempt by OSIS to clean up its files, the school secretary and accounting secretaries many days for former students. It took many days and accounting secretaries many days to respond to this request. There is no short cut for this kind of work which is a necessary part of clearing OSIS files and must be done periodically.

Staffing (Attendance Office)

The attendance office is always headed by the attendance coordinator. At some schools, there may be more than one coordinator. At a high dropout school in Manhattan, there are two coordinators, both teachers, who work on a contractual release time basis for a period of five years each. They do not serve concurrently, so that when the senior of the two returns to the classroom full time, the second coordinator will assume the senior position and another teacher will join her as the junior staff member.

In this high school, both coordinators teach one or two classes a term as well as carrying out their attendance duties. This means that they must schedule their attendance work around their classes, which sometimes makes them unavailable at crucial times.

At two other schools, one high dropout and one low dropout, the coordinators in charge both teach for two class periods. In two other high schools, also high and low dropout schools, the attendance coordinators are full-time paraprofessionals. One has held the job for six years, while the other joined the staff recently.

At each school, the coordinator's job is defined somewhat differently. In one high dropout school the attendance coordinator is the critical person who tracks attendance and coordinates all the reporting procedures. At another high dropout school, the greater part of the coordinator's time involves entering the daily data into the UAPC system.

Of special importance is the job of school secretary. Here again, there may be one or two in the office with varying titles and responsibilities. At a low dropout high school the school secretary maintains the official register on a daily basis, updating it with figures supplied by the UAPC system and from Co-op and special education attendance, which is still taken manually. Additionally, she processes over-the-counter admissions, handles inter-class transfers (setting up paper classes of LTAs), keeps track of list notice no-shows (those list notice ninth graders who never reported to high school at all and are not part of the official register), and prepares for the Central Board audits.

In one high dropout school, there are two staff workers with the title of Pupil Accounting Secretary. Each has worked there for over ten years maintaining the official register. Every month they go through the roll books by hand to find students who have been absent the entire month and compile a list of these for the attendance coordinator. The coordinator usually designates these students as LTAs. The secretaries then go through the roll books and put the LTAs into special classes. These secretaries are also responsible for preparing all the OSIS reports.

At another high dropout school, there are also two full-time secretaries. One has the title of Discharge and Pupil Accounting Secretary, while the other is the Admissions Secretary. Pupil Personnel Secretary is the title for this position in another high dropout school. That job is mostly clerical, involving such tasks as entering discharge codes and maintaining student records.

Paraprofessionals, school aides and student assistants provide additional staff support in all high schools. Their numbers vary, as do their responsibilities.

In one high dropout school there are four paraprofessionals in the attendance office. One is a fairly new employee and is in charge of TELSOL procedures. Another who has been at the school for over six years, originally working with families, now handles the initial procedures for readmitting students who have been absent. The third paraprofessional, a five-year veteran, is responsible for keeping records of students who have cut classes and sending letters to social service agencies. The fourth, recently assigned to the attendance office, prepares truancy reports for the attendance teacher, works as a back-up at the computer if the attendance coordinator is absent, and serves as a translator when one is needed.

At another low dropout school, two paraprofessionals work full-time. One handles all UAPC work and has just been put in charge of TELSOL. There is also an aide who works in the office for four hours a day. Whenever possible, the attendance office has two student aides working each period. At present, they have eight students working there daily.

At a high dropout school two school aides perform the daily attendance record-keeping. They distribute and collect the roll books, check them for completeness, compile the daily statistics, program the TELSOL machine and key the absent students' phone numbers into the machine. At another high dropout school there are several paraprofessionals and student aides helping with clerical duties, TELSOL, and attendance procedures.

Two schools, one with a high dropout rate and one with a low dropout rate, have a different division of personnel, with full-time secretaries of both admissions and discharge placed in the pupil personnel office rather than in the attendance office. In the low dropout school, in addition to the attendance coordinator and a secretary, there are four half-time aides, one full-time family assistant and one half-time secretary responsible for roll books. In the high dropout school, there is only the attendance coordinator and three aides—one full-time and two part-time.

Attendance Teacher

Attendance teachers are additional staff in the attendance office, although they are under the jurisdiction of the Board of Education, not the schools, and report to the Bureau of Attendance. The time they spend at their assigned schools depends on their caseloads and the needs of the individual schools. As in the case of one high dropout school, an attendance teacher may be assigned to full-time duty. That notwithstanding, at another high dropout school the teacher may work only four hours per week. Inconsistently, another may spend only one day a week at a low dropout school.

Appendix D2

Admissions and DischargesAdmissions

In New York City high schools the largest group of admissions comes from list-notice of students whose applications have been sent by feeder junior high schools to the Board of Education. These applications are processed starting in May, and by June the Board passes on this information to the high schools. This process seems to take longer each year as a result of a change in procedure that precludes direct application by students to the high schools.

As in the case of one high dropout school, there are informal contacts with the guidance departments of feeder schools so that students likely to have attendance problems can be tracked. The assistant principal feels that if a counselor establishes contact with the at-risk students within the first month, they might have a chance.

A second source of admissions are walk-ins or over-the-counter students who may wish to attend a high school for which they are not scheduled. The number of walk-ins depends upon various factors unique to each school; reputation, curriculum, and location all influence the figures. Though one low dropout school has relatively few over-the-counter students (at the beginning of the semester perhaps fifteen to twenty pupils a day), four high dropout schools have large walk-in populations, which places additional pressure on the school admissions staffs during registration. In one school, there were 620 over-the-counter registrants from September to May first. In another school, there were 741 walk-ins during September and 320 in February. The assistant principal has tried to decrease the extreme paperwork load from September walk-ins by establishing contact in June with schools that might be a source of students who will arrive in the fall. In February, the problem of placing walk-ins in classes is even more difficult, since most classes have already been filled and scheduling is tight. Last June, the school was able to process 53 students early.

The admissions secretaries usually handle these walk-ins. When the students come in to register, they first screen them to ascertain that they do live in the district. The Office of Zoning and Integration compiles a list of students approved to attend the school, which is then cross-checked with the school register. Since one school may be considered preferable to others in the area, students who live outside the district may try to attend it. Later, reading and math scores are checked to see if they match the criteria of the school. Students who are over sixteen cannot be rejected for having scores that are too low. The entering student, accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, must then be interviewed officially and must also present proof of residence and immunization.

List-notice students are also carefully checked upon admission. At one low dropout school, students accompanied by a parent or guardian are sent to the admissions secretary, who makes a determination concerning the

attendance zone and checks transfer papers. Any serious problems with established procedures are referred to the assistant principal. The admissions secretary fills out the "SARK-ADM" Form and assigns the student to a grade and a homeroom. The student is then sent to a program counselor for class schedule development.

At one high dropout school, the procedure is as follows. The admissions-discharge secretary is primarily responsible for keeping the admissions and discharge book. Students accompanied by a parent or guardian are sent to a guidance counselor, who checks transfer papers, immunization records and legal documents and fills out the necessary forms for admission. Students returning from custodial institutions are evaluated by the assistant principal. Those without transfer papers are given placement exams by department chairmen, who recommend class and grade assignments. After students have met the enrollment requirements, they are sent to a program counselor with their SARK-ADM Form for schedule development. The admissions-discharge secretary makes the proper entry in the admission book, and this information is sent to OSIS in the monthly report.

At another high dropout school, new students are assigned an in-house, four-digit identification number and entered in the computer. This adds their names to the enrollment master list that is drawn up in June. This master list, separate from the official register, is the anticipated enrollment in September on the basis of the list-notice assignments. The high school has the final responsibility for student records sent from the feeder junior high schools, regardless of whether the students actually attend school in September. If they do not attend, they become "list-notice no-shows" and their records must be held until another school requests them. If no request is made, their names are sent to the Bureau of Attendance whose priorities in September are said to be, first, "list-notice no shows" (including special education students) and then LTAs.

The official register consists of only those students who actually attend and it is compiled after the end-of-September "Clearance of Register" form has been processed. This form is issued to all section teachers, who list all the students who have not been in class.

At a low dropout school, upon being admitted, a new student is sent to the pupil accounting secretary after the guidance department obtains the information needed to design a program. The secretary looks at the program, examines the master list to find class sections having fewer than 34 students and schedules classes for the pupil accordingly. This information is then entered into the UAPC system.

At a high dropout school, the UAPC system for scheduling classes backs up during the months when there are large numbers of walk-ins because the computer can process the records of only twenty-five students a day. Therefore, the date when a student registers and when he or she can actually start attending classes may well differ, with no clear indication of how long a student might actually have to wait.

At a low dropout high school all list-notice students are programmed on a master list, but do not become part of the official register until they attend school for at least one day. The final step in the admissions

process for both list-notice and over-the-counter students is to be put on the register by the school secretary. This occurs when the OSIS-101 Form is received.

Readmissions

The percentage of students who are discharged and readmitted by their home school in the same year or later is a matter of dispute. Actual supporting data are hard to come by since none of the schools seem to keep these records. Any numbers suggested seemed to be estimations based on school officials' impressions of the problem. According to a staff member in one high dropout school, the same student can be discharged and readmitted three or four times in the same academic year. At this school, there was no effort to keep track of how many times this occurs. The number of discharges is tallied monthly for the PAR report from the entries in the OSIS book, and entered on the OSIS form. At the same time the school reports the number and type of admissions. There are three possible codes that can be used: 1) new admission, 2) readmission from a previous year, and 3) readmission from the current year. Using this information, OSIS can then adjust the discharge count. However, it is not known whether this actually occurs.

At another high dropout school, students also can be discharged more than once in the same academic year. The school has no means of changing the monthly discharge figures, even if the staff know a student is being discharged for the second time. Every readmission, however, is assigned the appropriate code on the admissions slip that is sent to the Board. It should be noted when a student is a readmit, for this would enable OSIS to make the necessary adjustment to the discharge figures.

At one low dropout school, an official said that there are at most eight pupils who have been discharged and readmitted. Though there are no procedures to prevent these students from being counted as double-dropouts, it is unlikely that there are enough cases of this nature to inflate the dropout rate. In two other schools, one a high dropout and the other a low dropout, there did not seem to be a problem with readmissions as long as there were no errors in OSIS entries.

At one high dropout school the procedure, for readmission of LTA students is as follows: 1) they must be readmitted with their residency and immunizations verified; 2) they must be accompanied by a parent; and 3) they must be interviewed by a representative of the guidance department. They may then be put into special classes for truants, sent back to regular classes, or referred to an alternative school. The paraprofessional in charge of the LTA readmit book records the date on which the student returned, the student's I.D. number, and whether the student was accompanied by a parent. Readmits who return after being absent most of the term are referred to the attendance teacher and later see the principal. The principal may determine that after some point in the term there will be no more readmissions. Students who are readmitted after having been discharged are treated no differently than walk-ins. A student who is readmitted is issued a new stat card with "readmit" written across the top, so

that if a manual search is done, all readmits can be located and the stat cards of the discharged students cross-checked. Presumably, readmits who dropped out again can be identified in this way. This information is not entered into UAPC under any code, so the search must be manual.

In a low dropout high school, the guidance office is in charge of readmissions. They are given a new UAPC I.D. number and a new card in the file. If a student is found to have both an attendance card and a discharge card at the end of the year, the school knows the student has dropped out and returned.

Discharges

Various school personnel are involved in the discharge process. While the school secretary usually makes the discharge official after the OSIS-101 Form has been received, the cases of students to be discharged are first examined by one or more of the following: the guidance counselor, the attendance teacher, and the attendance coordinator. Of the 39 discharge codes, schools use only the "over 17" or "not found" code. In the case of one low dropout school, students are discharged under three conditions:

1) Request from Another School

A school that has admitted a student makes a written request for his or her records. The school could be a private New York City school or an out-of-state school.

2) Request from Attendance Teacher

The attendance teacher requests a discharge from a guidance counselor, almost always with a code of "over 17" or "not found."

3) Request from Guidance Counselor

A guidance counselor requests that a student be discharged with the code designation of an "exit interview," although this does not always indicate that an actual interview took place.

In this low dropout school, no codes other than those on the standard OSIS list are used. Because of the heavy workload, almost no dropout codes are processed during September and October. Priority is given to the records of students who graduated during the summer. Terminology can also be ambiguous and therefore confusing. For instance, at the beginning of the school year, "no-shows" are students who do not show up. Later, the same term applies to students who are absent. In the latter case, "no-shows" (as opposed to "list-notice no-shows") become LTAs.

In addition to discharges, the school secretary also is responsible for inter-school transfers of special education students to mainstream classes, and vice versa.

Schools have different criteria for selecting students for discharge, but the procedure, for the most part, is the same. At the aforementioned low dropout school, two days before the end of each month, a computerized list is printed of all students who have been absent for twenty consecutive days, with codes indicating their guidance counselors. The counselors check to see if the students under their supervision should be regarded as LTAs. The computerized lists go to the attendance teacher and then to the school secretary, who makes the inter-school transfers. The attendance teacher sends parents a letter requesting interviews. When there is no response, if a phone number is given, the attendance teacher calls the parents to schedule an appointment. The next step is a home visit, and up to eight home visits may be made in an attempt to locate a student or a family. If the student is still not located, he is discharged with a "not found" code.

Students over sixteen can be discharged if they have working papers. Students over seventeen can be discharged with parental consent ("sign them out"). This year for the first time, students over eighteen can sign themselves out. Therefore, in the case of eighteen-year-old truants, the attendance teacher will see only the student, not the parents.

At one high dropout school, discharge codes can be assigned by the guidance counselor, attendance coordinator, or pupil accounting secretaries. Only the standard OSIS codes are used. The secretaries discharge students if they bring in a letter of admission to a private school. This is a less strict procedure than at one low dropout school, where a written request for records must come from the school, or at one high dropout school, where a request for a student's records is not considered sufficient to prove that a student has enrolled elsewhere. The attendance teacher at that school calls the new school, not only to check that the student is in fact enrolled, but that he is also attending classes. Only after verifying that the student is registered and not merely auditing classes will the attendance teacher approve a transfer discharge.

At the high dropout school cited earlier, the attendance teacher has a caseload of about 500 students. The attendance coordinator tries to discharge LTAs, particularly those over seventeen, by following these steps. First, a letter is sent to the parents requesting that they contact him at school. If no response is received within ten days, a second letter is sent setting an appointment time and suggesting that the parent either re-enroll or sign out the student. When a student decides to leave school or to transfer to another school, the attendance coordinator always tries to schedule an exit interview in which to review all of the student's options. However, after a student is discharged, there is no follow-up to see what has happened. When students are suspended, they rarely return to school, but they are discharged only if they are over seventeen.

At one school the attendance coordinator submits dropout figures to OSIS twice a year, on October 31 and March 31. The October 31st report is

the most important because it covers the entire past year. He keeps the numbers on a monthly basis and does not adjust them, so depending upon what source OSIS uses and whether they adjust the numbers, the dropout rate of schools such as this one could vary markedly.

In the fall the attendance coordinator at another high dropout school has the UAPC system generate a list of "no-shows", which is sent to the attendance teacher (who may already have three month backlog). Exit interviews are then performed by the guidance office. During the interview a discharge form is filled out, describing what the student intends to do. The form is sent to the attendance teacher and either the attendance teacher or the pupil accounting secretary fills out the seven-part discharge form (SARK DIS) and enters in the code. Although not performing the exit interview, the attendance teacher does counsel the students about alternative programs. When the student is discharged, his IBM card is destroyed and his stat card is moved from the active file to the discharge file. Copies of the discharge form are sent to the guidance office, to UAPC, to the program office, and to the homeroom teacher, who notes the discharge on the summary form in the roll book. Every month the discharge information is sent to the Board in the OSIS report.

Students under seventeen who are out of the country with no known address cannot be discharged and are kept on the books. Students between sixteen and seventeen and therefore not legally required to be in school are often difficult cases. They may be waiting for work yet may not bother to fill out the letter from the employer. It was also reported that at times these students work "off-the-books" and are paid less than the minimum wage by employers who will not sign any papers. They also may simply decide that they do not want to go to school. The attendance teacher may visit these students a number of times.

At a low dropout school, the attendance coordinator tracks down the no-show students in the fall. Phone calls are made to students' homes to determine whether or not they are attending school in another district. Some pupils board with relatives so that they can attend schools perceived to be better. As in the discharge procedures of other schools, an exit interview is arranged with parents, the student and the assistant principal or a guidance counselor. The following information is recorded on a form: the date, OSIS number, student I.D. number, the old and new addresses of the student, and the reason for leaving as described by the counselor. This form is sent to the pupil accounting secretary, who transfers the information to a 407 Form and enters the discharge code. The slips have codes other than "code 39," which may be changed, for example, from "39" to "30" if the school learns that a student has received a GED. If this change occurs after the information is entered on a formal report to the Board, the school must follow a more involved procedure to correct the record. The pupil accounting secretary puts more information than is asked for on 407 Forms in case new codes are developed which, would otherwise require her to look up this information by hand.

During the exit interview, an effort is made to inform the student of alternative programs and to facilitate entry into one of them if interest is expressed. The interviewer contacts the alternative center to set up an appointment for the student. After a week, the attendance coordinator

calls the center to ascertain whether or not the student is attending. When a student is admitted or discharged, the roll book summary sheet is updated. In the case of discharge, the IBM attendance card is moved to the back of the roll book. Also, the card of each student discharged is pulled from the records file and a new card for the discharge file is made.

At two other schools, one with a high and the other with a low dropout rate, the discharge procedures can be initiated in many ways. In the high dropout school the discharge code is determined by the guidance counselor and sent to the assistant principal for approval. After approval is given, the admissions-discharge secretary makes the proper entry in the discharge book and sends it to OSIS in a monthly report. A copy of the discharge form is attached to the permanent record and filed. At this school, exit interviews are seldom conducted.

At the low dropout school, the formal procedure begins with the discharge secretary. She makes the determination of the proper discharge code, fills out the official discharge form, and sends it to the assistant principal for guidance. A copy of the discharge form is placed in the student's permanent record folder, and, in the case of transferring students, all records are prepared to be sent to the receiving school. The records are held until the school requests them. The proper entry is made in the discharge book and the UAPC report. The UAPC daily report is checked for accuracy every day. A report to OSIS is submitted once a month. This is a copy of the official admission and discharge book.

Admission/Discharge Statistics

High Dropout School(s):

1. The present caseload of the attendance teacher, who has been on the job for just two months, averages about 500 students.
2. The present caseload of the attendance teacher is about 200. This figure changes little because as some cases are closed, others are opened. During the fall of 1984, about 100 names of list-notice no-shows were sent from this school to the Bureau of Attendance.
3. In this school, there were 741 walk-ins during September. In February, there were 320 walk-ins. The assistant principal has tried to decrease the overwhelming paperwork load from September walk-ins by establishing contact in June with schools that might have students who will be coming to his school. Last June, it was possible to process fifty-three students early.

4. From the 1,200 students listed at this school, 600 no-shows had not been found by October first. After searching OSIS, making requests for records from other schools, and talking to neighbors and friends, 247 students still remained "not found." These were classified as truants and turned over to the attendance teacher. An additional twenty-five students that should have returned to grades eleven and twelve went through the same process. In addition to the listed students and returning students, there were the following:

<u>Admissions</u>	<u>Discharges</u>	<u>Month</u>
665	128	SEP
87	119	OCT
72	257	NOV
21	193	DEC
15	335	JAN
186	134	FEB
54	224	MAR
53	154	APR
<u>1153</u>	<u>1144</u>	<u>8 months</u>

There were 620 walk-in registrants from September to May first. Out of the 1,200 listed students from the feeder schools, approximately 600 were flagged as PREP A or B.

Low Dropout School(s)

In one of the low dropout schools, few students are admitted or discharged during the year. The heaviest transfer times are at the beginning or end of a semester. This February, seventy students were discharged and eighty admitted. In the middle of the semester, there were probably only one or two dozen discharges, with more toward the end. No problems are experienced with students making long visits to their homelands. About 300 students have not been located or have been discharged as "not found." At this school there were 241 walk-ins in September and October, and sixty-two in February. The following numerical breakdown indicates the pattern for the year:

1. Six to seven hundred listed students for the fall term were received in June from feeder schools.
2. Twenty-five students were no-shows.

3. Twelve students showed up within two or three days.
4. Thirteen names were sent to the school by mistake.

In addition to the listed students, there were the following:

<u>Admissions</u>	<u>Discharges</u>	<u>Month</u>
222	174	SEP
21	98	OCT
18	47	NOV
7	29	DEC
7	30	JAN
62	68	FEB
20	36	MAR
2	33	APR
359	515	8 months

Appendix D3

Absences, Truancy and Suspensions**Absences**

The following are methods of dealing with absences:

1. A call by TELSOL to the home of an absent student. If there is a legitimate excuse for the absence and the absence will last only a few days, the home is not called again. If a child answers the phone, another call is placed.
2. A postcard from the automated UAPC system.
3. A call to the parents and a visit to the home of the absent student.
4. A letter sent to the home after a number of consecutive days absent, requesting a conference with the parents and the student. If there is no response within ten days, a second letter is sent, stating that the student, if under seventeen, will be listed as a truant or, if over seventeen, will be discharged as a dropout.

Regarding the issue of students taking extended leaves to visit relatives is the Caribbean, only those schools with high dropout rates experienced this as a problem. How this problem is handled and how these students are accounted for varies from school to school. At one school, students who return to their homeland for a few weeks are kept on the register. Students who inform the school that they will be returning cannot be discharged until there is a new address for the student. At another school, decisions regarding these students are based on each individual case, with various codes assigned depending on the circumstances. Some students are carried on the register. Others might receive the code for unlawful detention if the parents sent their children away knowing they would miss school. Yet another code is applicable if the child is stranded without enough money to return to New York.

Truancy

From the schools reporting, there appears to be a correlation between the point at which a student is considered truant and that school's dropout rate. The higher the dropout rate, the higher the number of absences allowed before the student is considered truant, and vice versa. The range of absences allowed before the student is declared truant extends from five

to ten days in one low dropout school to an entire month in a high dropout school. Once the absence limit has been reached, the general practice among reporting schools is to fill out a truant report and to attempt to establish contact with the student's parents by phone and/or home visits. One school reports that truant reports (Form 407) are sometimes filled out at the request of teachers.

There is frustration with the way the courts now handle truancy. Changes in court proceedings in the 1970's made it harder for the Bureau of Attendance to win cases. Their representatives are no longer allowed to present cases in court, but instead must wait to be asked to give evidence. If a truant student is under fifteen and a half, a PINS (Person in Need of Supervision) petition stating that the child is out of control may be filed in Family Court. Students in PINS proceedings, however, are now represented by a lawyer (often from Legal Aid) who attempts to win the case by disputing the Bureau's attendance figures. It is often perceived that the lawyer is more concerned with winning the case than with the student's welfare. If the only offense is truancy, it will mean five or six court visits by the attendance officer, often to no avail. This discourages school officials from taking cases to court. By law, cases of "educational neglect," where a child is kept out of school deliberately by an adult for even one day, should be reported to an 800 number.

Suspensions

Suspension (in those schools which define its use) is a disciplinary action whereby students may be barred from school for a maximum of five days. At one high dropout school, after a suspension is made "principal to principal" transfers are often negotiated. Suspended students are sent to another high school, usually as a "trade" (one disciplinary problem is exchanged for another). The reported advantage in this is that suspended students cannot return to their old high school to make trouble with the same classmates and teachers. Another school has two forms of suspension: 1) the student may only return to school accompanied by a parent; or 2) a "superintendent's suspension." In the latter case, the student can be readmitted only by another school. One high dropout school states that suspended students rarely return to school, while a low dropout school states that suspensions are rare and occur only after thorough intervention.

Appendix D4

Automated or Manual Student Accounting System

UAPC

The majority of the schools surveyed report using UAPC. Of these, however, one school still keeps attendance manually for co-op and special education classes. There was overall satisfaction with UAPC service, although the following problems were mentioned: (1) inaccuracy of some UAPC generated data (especially in the recording of discharges and the occasional failure to read some cards), (2) errors in producing the monthly Honor Roll of students with perfect attendance (UAPC listed students with "0%" attendance as having "100%" attendance), and (3) confusion when the UAPC system was down, leaving the schools with no way to record attendance, except manually.

As a result of some of these problems with UAPC, one school keeps an official register that is used. At this school, it was also felt that the roll books identify students who should be considered truant or put in LTA classes that they do state, however, that UAPC data were helpful in the production of some of the monthly reports required by OSIS.

In-house Computer

Only one school reported using an in-house computer system. This system, which was developed for the school, tracks such information as attendance, immunizations, class schedules, grades, test scores, and the number of times a student's home is called by TELSOL. Once a student's records are entered into its database, all subsequent records can be identified by pre-printed computer labels. This eliminates hand copying of information, saves time, and prevents clerical errors. Teachers receive a printout of students who have cut classes that same day. Special education students are also tracked on this system.

One school reported having no computerized attendance system at present but plans to use UAPC next year. They now use an in-school identification number instead of an OSIS number for their own student records, but will switch to OSIS numbers once they are on UAPC.

TELSOL

Only the school with its own in-house computer system had the advantage of computerized integration with TELSOL. This is advantageous in that it eliminates the daily keying in of phone numbers and the possibility of errors. Up to seven different messages can be coded on TELSOL machines, with each phone number being assigned the appropriate message. Because of the search time this requires, this feature is not generally used. TELSOL

also could not handle such a large load, so priority must be given to establishing contact with the homes of absentees.

TELSOL is also used at the school reporting no computerized attendance system. However there are two major disadvantages: (1) not all homeroom teachers write down the phone numbers of absent students; and (2) although TELSOL is supposed to call the parents of every student who is absent on a given day, the machine cannot handle the load, so not all the calls are completed.

Of UAPC-serviced schools reporting about TELSOL, only one school possessed the technology necessary for integration of the two systems. TELSOL is not connected to UAPC, making it necessary to key in as many as 390 phone numbers daily, which is an inefficient use of both hardware capability and staff time.

OSIS

The consensus of opinion among schools in the sample was that duplicate OSIS numbers are not a problem. Additionally, it was reported that when duplication does occur it is easily remedied by following the OSIS procedure for retracting a new number and using the old one; (2) the new OSIS hotline makes it easier to check problems with OSIS numbers; and (3) more errors were caused by the incorrect transcription of numbers by personnel than by the assignment of duplicate numbers.

Instances of problems reported with OSIS include the following: (1) too great a time lapse in transferring students, (2) monthly register reports missing OSIS numbers which then had to be looked up manually and written in, (3) no notification of alternative high school admissions (it was noted that students re-enrolling after having been out of school for awhile are probably still counted as dropouts), and (4) difficulty of error correction. Although there was some agreement that OSIS reports did contain errors, there was disagreement as to whether or not the errors were specified in the reports.

Appendix D5

Identification of At-Risk Students

The majority of schools identify at-risk students as those with excessive absences in their feeder schools the previous year. One low dropout school sets the number of absences allowed before a student is considered at risk at twenty-five, while another also considers poor achievement in determination of the at-risk student. Still another low dropout school states that it checks whether there are legitimate reasons for high absenteeism. Some schools tend to consider all of their students as being potentially at risk.

The handling of identified at-risk students may vary from targeting them for special attention and placing them into special classes to enrolling them in a Holding Power Program. At the majority of schools, identification of at-risk students is made by the attendance coordinator, with only one school indicating that identification is made by the guidance office (with no particular staff member specified). One low dropout school reports that additional referrals are made by members of the pupil personnel team.

Programs for the At-Risk Student

The majority of high dropout schools in the sample had some sort of program for the at-risk student. Types of programs found in the schools sampled included the following: 1) a ninth grade program with its own guidance counselor, grade advisor, and family paraprofessional for home visits; 2) a tenth grade program organized in the same manner; 3) a SOAR program directed at holdover tenth graders; 4) Serrano funding for a counselor, a neighborhood worker, and four reduced-size classes of twenty-five students each; 5) a LYFE center (an in-school facility where high school students can leave their children, originally promised for this year and expected to be in operation by fall 1986); and a PREP program with remedial classes and one counselor for every 200 (rather than every 400) students, and a Serrano counselor working with high risk students (technically only for ninth graders, although students in all grades are served.)

Among the schools with low dropout rates, one places at-risk students into a Holding Power Program while the other refers them to a program originally set up to deal with students with substance abuse or emotional problems. The latter school has five counselors for 2,700 students, plus one counselor for the program described and another for the 140 special education students.

Of the two schools having no special program for at-risk students, one has a low dropout rate and the other a high dropout rate. At both schools, students designated as being at risk are assigned to a guidance counselor. The high dropout school, however, gives its at-risk students remediation because their work is at least one or two years below grade level.

Dropout Profile

It appears that at-risk students have often been previously identified in elementary or junior high schools as poor achievers and absentees. The most common reasons listed for dropping out were these:

1. Lack of adequate supervision at home (most being from single-parent homes in which the mother works and there is no one to see that the child goes to school).
2. NYC parents from the Caribbean who transport their children back and forth between the two places in the course of a school day.
3. Lack of English language proficiency.
4. Lack of academic success.
5. Being over age for the grade level.
6. Greater value placed on a job than on education.
7. Pregnancy.
8. Substance abuse.
9. Need for money to support themselves or their family.
10. Family problems.
11. Rebellion against overly strict parents.
12. Lack of daycare facilities for the children of teenage mothers.
13. Arrest record.
14. Inability to adjust to the "freedom" of high school.

It was found that it is not unusual for students to drop out more than once in the same or different academic years. Additionally, the dropout rate of returning mothers tends to increase as the baby gets older and needs more attention or as the child begins to contract childhood illnesses and needs someone to nurse him.

Specific Problem Populations

The most frequently reported problem population is the students on maternity leave. One low dropout school cited this as their largest problem population. Patterns distinguishing this group of students include reports that (1) students taking maternity leave rarely return, and those who do are usually those who stayed in school while pregnant; (2) most of these students stay in school until the baby is born, with those returning to school after giving birth likely to be those whose own mothers are at home to look after the child; and (3) that despite the fact that welfare provides money for a babysitter so that the mother may return to school, the dropout rate of the returned mothers increases as the baby gets older and needs more attention, or begins to contract childhood illnesses.

Hispanic students taking extended leaves to visit the Caribbean were found to be a problem only in high dropout schools. The same was found to be the case with students needing "face-to-face" letters required by welfare. It appears that students needing such letters are knowledgeable about the minimum amount of attendance required to remain on public assistance. One school reports that students need only attend one day out of twenty to remain on the register. Another school has instituted an informal policy of telling the parent that comes to school for the welfare letter that in order to get a letter, the student must attend school continuously for two weeks. Since welfare regulations actually require only that a student be listed on the official school register, these policies cannot be strictly enforced.

Special education and co-op students do not seem to be a problem in these schools, although there does appear to be a variety of procedures for handling these groups. One school reports that the Bureau of Attendance wishes to be notified when special education students are absent for ten consecutive days, as opposed to twenty days for mainstream students. Otherwise, the Bureau usually gives special education long term absentees the same priority.

Special Pupil Accounting Problems

General dissatisfaction was noted by all schools regarding the lack of notification when their former students completed GEDs. One school was notified only if students completed the GED in their own Night Division. Another school reported that it is notified by OSIS if the student finishes the Night Division, but if a student in a GED program does not finish before June of the year in which he normally would have graduated, the records cannot be changed to remove him from the dropout rate; and if the student finishes in any non-public program, there is no notification and the student continues to be carried as a dropout. There were also complaints about lack of notification regarding students enrolling in non-City schools and alternative high schools.

One school indicated that only if there is a request from a retrieval center for their school records are students not counted as dropouts, and such requests are rare. Another school said that it does not discharge the

student until the alternative program has notified the school or, if the student is over 17, he or she has come in with parents. Due to the lack of notification, one school has begun to give departing students who may enroll at an alternate school a pre-addressed envelope to mail back to them.

Another problem was the slow processing of transfers, which often resulted in pupils being enrolled in two schools at once. The schools attributed this problem variously to the delay of records transfer, laxness on the part of schools in sending or requesting records, "the overall system," and regulations prohibiting removal of list-notice no-shows from the roll books before October 31 (even when it was known that these students were in another school).

Appendix E

PUPIL ACCOUNTING AND ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

ANALYSIS IN ONE HIGH SCHOOL

This appendix contains a discussion of the comprehensive study of attendance-related issues in one Manhattan High-School. A summary of this material is found in the second section of Part One. This appendix includes the following subsections:

Introduction

Homeroom

Security

Attendance Office - Morning

Computer Facility

TELSOL

Attendance Office - Afternoon

OSIS

Attendance Teacher

Discussion and Recommendations

Introduction

We try to do what is best for every kid,
and see each kid as an individual. Even
one dropout is a tragedy.

Principal

As a comprehensive study, one group of the study team was given the task of analyzing the attendance and accounting procedures in one high school. The objective was to trace the attendance procedures from the beginning of a school day to its conclusion. All staff who were part of the process were observed and interviewed. The team was assigned a Manhattan zoned, comprehensive high school with a Board reported high dropout rate.

The selected high school was described as having a population of 3,150 students, although that number fluctuated between 2,800 and 3,500 in several interviews. It is a racially diverse school with a large Hispanic student population. As a zoned high school, it is required to accept any pupil living within in its geographic area. This proved to be a sensitive issue in an introductory meeting with the Principal.

"Dropout rates are meaningless," he said. "Third tier schools like us are required to take all of the rest of the students that no one else wants. High schools with a low dropout rate just 'dump' their problem cases on schools like ours to improve their statistics." Responding to the fact that his school is a target for various studies on the dropout problem, he said, "I don't care what you or any other researchers find. We have the best attendance of any comprehensive high school in Manhattan. Dropout statistics are either dishonest or stupid because they are so simplistic, and I am sick of hearing about them, and sick of hearing this school denigrated for its dropout rate. The kids we educate are more often the ones everyone else has dumped and they perhaps deserve an education more than any other group in society."

Defining the school's goal for dropouts, he said, "We try to track the attendance problems in every way and for as long as there appears to be hope that we can get the kids back in." The Principal offered full cooperation in the study, and the school staff gave generously of their time and energy in responding to the study team's queries.

Homeroom

Watch what happens...this is one of God's
miracles. They (the attendance materials) go out
with the tide, and then all come back in.

Attendance Coordinator

The attendance process starts at 7:00 a.m. in the attendance office, with the arrival of the attendance coordinators and their assistants. They begin preparation for attendance taking in the homerooms at 9:26 a.m., between the second and third periods. The roll book for each homeroom (containing an attendance card on each student in that homeroom) is placed in its proper location. Promptly at 9:23 a.m., the assigned students from each homeroom enter the attendance office to pick up the roll books for their respective homeroom teachers. They barely avoid collision with the attendance personnel, tardy students, and one another.

The study team selected a ninth grade class to observe. The homeroom teacher receives the attendance material from her student assistant as the second bell rings at 9:26. Over half of the seats are empty. The teacher explains that this homeroom has many absentees—mainly "cutters."

The teacher rapidly flips through the roll book, noting each absence in the book and on the Daily Attendance Report (DAR) form. She races against the clock to complete her chores. Periodically, she asks the students to be quiet. Amid the noise and confusion, the P.A. system is activated for an announcement of the names of those students who have won movie passes in the monthly perfect attendance lottery. Competing with the loudspeaker, the teacher continues to take attendance and to shout an announcement regarding free medical services for students.

The 9:38 a.m. bell rings, signaling the end of homeroom. The student assistant returns the attendance book and the DAR sheet to the attendance office before going on to her third period class. The outer room is jammed with assistants from all over the school. The attendance staff rush to gather and sort the incoming materials, all arriving within the space of three minutes.

Security

Every school has its own system.
We just have our system.

Superintendent of Security

The security division is composed of eight guards--six men and two women. Two are school safety officers and cannot make arrests. Six are peace officers and have been deputized to make arrests. One of the eight is the superintendent of the group. They are supervised by the assistant principal for security, whose title is security coordinator.

The security division is part of the attendance process in that it intercepts students who arrive late.

The school schedule is as follows:

First period	8:00 to 8:40
Second period	8:43 to 9:23
Homeroom	9:26 to 9:38
Third period	9:42 to 10:22

Between 8:00 and 9:00 a.m., students may filter into the building. If they are late to class at this time, it is up to the teacher to ask for a late pass. Late students are requested to identify themselves by their program cards or ID numbers. If they have neither with them, they are asked for their IBM numbers, which are assigned by the school. If a student cannot give an IBM number, the guard considers him a trespasser and will not allow him to remain on the premises.

Late arrivers must sign a late pass, which is stamped by an officer. The student takes half of this pass to give to his homeroom teacher. Security keeps the other half until 10:00 a.m., when the entire batch of late passes is sent up to the attendance office to be recorded. Anyone coming in later than 10:00 a.m. is escorted to the dean's office.

Security says that one result of this system, which has been in place for over six years, is a reduced number of late arrivers. On the average, there are forty to fifty students who come late each day out of approximately 3,200. Another result is more effective security for the school, as the system stops intruders. The superintendent of security implies that because of the "extracurricular" activities of some students, potentially dangerous non-students may try to enter the school building. Now, however, it's harder for these people to get inside. A peace officer adds, "I think there also ought to be a metal detector, and everyone who enters the school should pass through it."

When asked to give recommendations for improving attendance, the superintendent of security says, "Attendance is good, but as far as going to classes, that's a different ballgame." He cited the problem of the "in-school" dropouts—those students who check in for attendance but do not go to classes, or go to a few classes, get a bathroom pass, and never return. These students loiter in the cafeteria for most of the day and are difficult to identify and apprehend. Lunch periods stretch from third to eighth period, with fourth to seventh periods (10:30 - 1:15) as the busiest time, with 600-700 students using the lunch room. Security estimates that on any given day, there might be as many as 500 in-school dropouts.

In respect to disciplining "wanderers" once they are apprehended, the officers raised another issue. These "roamers" may drift in and out of the cafeteria three or four times before being spotted by a guard and brought to a dean. "Sometimes I bring a tardy kid, a cutter, or a problem kid up to see a dean, but the dean doesn't have time to deal with the case because he's running off to teach a class. 'Court dismissed!' The kid gets away with something when he shouldn't. It's not that the deans are not doing their jobs. They just need more help." Picking up on the staff shortage issue, another guard says, "I think there would be more impact on attendance if attendance teachers went out and visited the parents of 'roamers'"

as well as the parents of absentees. We need more attendance teachers. Most parents don't know their kids aren't in school, or that they are in school but not in class."

Attendance Office - Morning

We are all accountants in this office.

Attendance Coordinator

Every day at 9:40 a.m., six to eight workers gather in the outer room of the attendance office to help with the morning rush. Personnel includes school aides, the attendance secretary, family assistants, and some student assistants. All know their jobs and appear to do them with a minimum of fuss, although the office is crowded and noisy. Students and parents are in and out, requesting face-to-face letters, consultations, and discharges. Teachers and counselors also visit, as well as other people who require office approval of paperwork. At the same time, assigned students from every homeroom return the Daily Attendance Registers and Daily Attendance Reports. After replacing the roll books in their slots, the students leave the DARs on the table for the staff to sort out.

The nurse's office also sends in reports of any attendance-related problems. The staff gathers the daily lateness reports and the late passes that security sends up just after 10:00 a.m. As this new information arrives, office workers update the DARs, noting that some students marked absent are late instead. Attendance registers from the homeroom teachers are also corrected. There are no late arrivals from the homeroom that the study team visited.

An employee in charge of entering the day's absences in the computer system moves to the inner office where the school's IBM 5251 terminal is located. Two attendance coordinators work there, as well as the attendance secretary and the paraprofessional who operates the TELSOL machine. The attendance teacher, who has a desk in the outer room, also uses this office from time to time. Beside the computer is a printer, and various people enter throughout the day to get printouts from computer files.

The aide calls up the computer's menu, which offers 1) a display of student information, 2) personal computer file support, 3) truancy reports (Form 407) to the Bureau of Attendance, and 4) the key daily absence file.

The aide enters the attendance information in the the key daily absence file, beginning with grade twelve (thereby allowing late arrivals to grades 9 and 10 a "grace period"). When she is finished, she places the DAR sheets and late passes in a large envelope and puts it in a file cabinet. This ensures that an original record for any student can be produced if necessary.

The aide then takes a blank cassette downstairs to the computer room to tape the absentee information she needs for the daily calls of the TELSOL machine.

Computer Facility

TELSOL was a terribly time-consuming procedure until we got our school computer involved in making its tapes.

Attendance Coordinator

The school's IBM computer is housed in a large first-floor room that is easily accessible to personnel of the other two NYC high schools that share the equipment. The room is in use from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily, and is available for limited use by personnel on weekends.

To assist in the attendance process, an IBM PC with an L-1000 tape machine is hardwired to the 5251 computer. At approximately 12:30 p.m. each day, a list of absentees is compiled on the 5251, called up on the IBM PC, and made into a tape cassette with the L-1000. This cassette of absentees is then taken back upstairs to the attendance office for use in the TELSOL machine. From this tape, the TELSOL will receive its orders as to which students' parents to phone that day.

Each TELSOL cassette is restricted by the limits set by attendance personnel and never, therefore, lists the total number of daily absentees. The tape for 4/30/85 includes those students in the following categories:

1. Absentees who have not been called at all this month.
2. Absentees who have been called once this month.
3. Absentees who have been called twice this month.

An additional printout of total daily absentees by section order, separate from the TELSOL tape, is also run off each day on the 5251 and kept on file in the attendance office.

TELSOL

TELSOL brought us out of the Stone Age.

Attendance Coordinator

At approximately 1:00 p.m. each school day, the tape cassette of absentees is inserted into the TELSOL machine, and the information is read into the machine's memory. At the same time, a list is printed for the attendance office files. The TELSOL machine places calls to all homes on the list. The machine will phone until 9:30 p.m. daily and on weekends,

making as many as 300-400 calls per day, far more than any person could make.

Late each morning, an aide prints out the list of the TELSOL calls that were "answered." Since the TELSOL machine is voice-activated, an "answered" call is defined as one in which either a human voice or a recording answered the call. The aide, who is bilingual (Spanish-English), sits at the machine with the list and plays back the tape recording of all the "answers." Next to each phone number, she notes 1) the excuse given for the absence, 2) whether the call was answered by an "invalid receiver," such as a child or an answering machine, or 3) whether the speaker appeared to have difficulty understanding the message in English. All TELSOL calls requiring a follow-up are redialed by the aide manually, who then asks to speak to the parent personally and leaves a message if the parent is not at home. The aide says that by May 1985, Spanish-speaking parents will receive a bilingual TELSOL message.

After the calling is completed, the list is filed along with the list of total calls made that day. When parents are called in regarding their child's poor attendance, these lists are displayed in order to demonstrate the number of times the home was contacted.

The attendance coordinator states that a list is also compiled of "no contacts" (those calls that were not answered). Those students' files are checked on the IBM 5251. If a student has not been contacted, the students are referred to the attendance teacher. It is not entirely clear how long a student's TELSOL calls could remain unanswered before the school takes action, but it is probably more than a month. It is also unclear as to whether a truant's home would be called more than three or four times per month.

Attendance Office - Afternoon

Each high school is its own autonomous unit when it comes to developing record-keeping procedures.

Attendance Coordinator

Two secretaries and an aide are involved in the compilation of records required by the Central Board of Education. One secretary is in charge of admissions, the other is in charge of discharges, and the aide verifies the OSIS reports.

The admissions secretary compiles the monthly attendance reports for the Board of Education through a two-step process. First, she uses the class report on register and attendance to record the daily attendance for each homeroom. This form lists all admissions, interclass transfers, intergrade transfers, and discharges by homeroom for that day, as well as the present register count and the number of absences for each section. These forms must be signed by the admissions secretary and by each homeroom teacher at the end of every month.

At the end of every month, the admissions secretary compiles a periodic attendance report summarizing all attendance activity in the school for that month. This report resembles a balance sheet in that the number of admissions and discharges must balance. When the report is completed, the admissions secretary and the principal sign it. According to the admissions secretary, no end-of-year report is required. Although the school has its own internal computer system, both the daily and the monthly attendance reports are done manually.

The periodic attendance report is forwarded to OSIS in a pre-addressed envelope. When asked if the attendance figures and the OSIS verification reports are all sent to the same place, the staff members affirm that they are. Neither the secretary nor the attendance coordinator knows the exact location of the attendance reporting functions at the Central Board of Education, nor did they seem to know how the Board processes the information they send.

OSIS

OSIS has to figure out a way to service us back.
Attendance Coordinator

"OSIS is a closed system," says the attendance coordinator. "All they do is bother our staff for records they already have at the Central Board." He explains, "OSIS will come back two years after data have been filed and tell us to change discharge rates, which can no longer be changed since our books have been closed."

There is clearly a large measure of impatience with the system. "OSIS, with its 'arms of the octopus,' should send monthly reports to the high schools regarding kids in the GED and alternative programs so that we don't have to include them in our dropout statistics, but they have never done this. Instead, we are required to follow up discharged students and inform the Central Board of their whereabouts, although we have already given the students their papers and OSIS numbers to take to the new school." The attendance coordinator views this as an unnecessary burden that should be handled by OSIS. Regarding the possible duplication of OSIS numbers, he says, "We rarely have those problems. However, these numbers are not being fully utilized by the Department of Human Resources and other groups who are supposed to use them instead of bothering us." He is referring mainly to the constant flow of welfare parents coming into the attendance office to request face-to-face letters.

The coordinator also complains that OSIS makes some admissions mistakes that it will not correct. Instead, it requires the school to file readmission reports on these students, even though the students have been in school all the time and the school has accurately reported them. "There are seventeen of these cases this year," he exclaims. "Multiply that by 100 high schools, and it could add up to an error of 1,700 kids." When asked what OSIS does for the schools, the attendance coordinator emphasized

that OSIS continually asks the schools to supply them with information in the form of periodic reports but gives little back in the way of service. Another frustrating practice is when OSIS notes an error regarding a student, but fails to inform the school what the error is. The school is notified that there is an error in the record book but is given no indication of what to look for. Many hours are spent trying to solve these mysteries.

Another perspective on OSIS comes from the school aide who handles most of the OSIS reporting for the attendance office. Today she is in the record room, looking up the permanent record cards of students appearing on the latest OSIS report. She examines the cards closely, searching for all the detailed information the report requires. She says, "Each OSIS report asks you to do a certain thing, but there are so many different types of 'certain things' at different times of the year." It is a time-consuming process that often requires her to search for verification in several places, such as the current student cards, the discharge cards, or the attendance books. The information she needs to verify for the OSIS reports does not come from the school's computer. When asked how long it takes to complete a report, she says, "On the average, anywhere from one to three weeks." Her task for the day is to verify the grade levels of a list of high-risk students given to her by the guidance department for a special report mandated by the Serrano legislation.

Later, in the attendance office, the school aide lists the OSIS reports she has been asked to complete this year:

1. Discharge Verification Report (November 1984)
2. High School Mid-Year Alpha Roster (January 1985)
3. Graduation Roster Check Sheet (February 2, 1985)
4. IAD (Admission and Discharge) Report (March 1985)
5. Special High Risk Report (May 1985)

When asked what she does if she reaches an impass and needs help, the school aide points to the telephone number at the bottom of the report. "I call the OSIS Helpline. They're terrific. They help me with any questions." This number, it turns out, is not a central OSIS number that she can call any time for any information regarding OSIS. A different telephone number appears on each report and is used only for the "life" of that project.

Attendance Teacher

The privilege of discharge has been
taken away from the attendance teacher.
Now the process requires letters.
Attendance Teacher

The attendance teacher assigned to this high dropout high school is also responsible for covering several other high schools, as well as making

court appearances. In this high school, he has a caseload of approximately 200 students per month, and may visit four to five homes each morning. It is a heavy schedule, and he must take the cases in the order of priority, concentrating mainly on the ninth and tenth graders with attendance problems and eleventh and twelfth graders with severe attendance problems. Since the school's students come from all five boroughs, the attendance teacher must travel all over the City. He frequently encounters difficulty in seeing working parents during the day, but always leaves a Bureau of Attendance form at each home he visits. He keeps very careful records on the home situations he observes. According to the attendance teacher, none of his cases is ever "dead." A student must return to school, be assigned a discharge code, or remain on his books until the age of 21.

The attendance teacher had begun the morning with a visit to the home of a seventeen-year-old truant. He was able to speak to the student's elder brothers, who professed ignorance of their sibling's absenteeism. (According to the attendance teacher, this is a common reaction among family members of truants.) The attendance teacher informed them that due to the boy's age and attendance record (absent 86 days, unexcused), the school is planning to institute discharge proceedings. He asked that the parents establish contact with the school immediately. Later in the day, the attendance teacher spoke to the truant directly, who was shocked to learn that he was in danger of being discharged. When asked the reason for his poor attendance, the boy replied that he is failing all of his subjects. The attendance teacher offered to transfer him to an evening GED program, but the student expressed a desire to be allowed to return to the high school.

In delineating the school's discharge procedure, the attendance teacher outlined the following steps, which are utilized only with students seventeen years of age or older. After a student has either twenty consecutive days of unexcused absences or a very poor overall pattern of attendance for the semester, a letter is sent to the home informing the parents of the absenteeism and asking them to attend a scheduled conference at the school in the company of their child. This letter clearly states that if the parents fail to establish contact with the school, the student may be discharged. If the family neglects to meet with the attendance coordinator, a second letter is sent to the parents notifying them that the student has been discharged and suggesting alternative settings in which he or she may enroll.

It was interesting to note that the list of alternative settings in the discharge letter consisted only of GED programs. No mention was made of the fact that a student may request a transfer to an alternative high school. The attendance teacher replied that this was because the alternative high school programs have very high admission standards, rigid admissions schedules, and accept only a small percentage of those who apply. They are reluctant, he said, to take truants or those who are below their grade level. Only highly motivated students who are able to continue to attend a day program are referred to the alternative high schools. It appears that these referrals are usually made by the school's guidance office. This tightening of admissions standards is, according to him, a reaction to the "musical chairs" atmosphere of not so long ago, when a truant could "float" between his assigned high school and an alternative

high school, rarely attending either. In an afternoon discussion, the attendance coordinator corroborated this.

Discussion and Recommendations

I don't know if you'll be able to make any sense of all of this. It will come out sounding like War and Peace.

Attendance Coordinator

It was clear that this high school regarded attendance taking and student record keeping as very important functions and performed them diligently. The hierarchical arrangement of the attendance office, with its clear division of labor and the senior attendance coordinator at the helm, gave order to what otherwise might have been an extremely chaotic process in such a large high school. The attendance personnel, though often working in less than ideal conditions and under the pressure of deadlines, managed to complete the necessary daily and monthly tasks efficiently while simultaneously serving the many "drop-ins" that arrived in the office unannounced to request letters and record changes. The school's acquisition of a mini-computer and the innovative ways in which it was being used is a credit to the principal and the attendance staff. The way of linking the computer to the TELSOL machine system for immediate attendance retrieval should certainly be replicated by other schools.

On the whole, the study team found much that was commendable about the school. The building was very clean and free of graffiti, and there was a notable absence of loiterers. The security division maintained a very visible and yet cordial presence throughout the halls. There was also an attendance incentive program in operation that awarded movie passes for perfect monthly attendance—something that the students seemed to enjoy striving for. All attendance personnel were extremely personable and helpful and extraordinarily willing to find time in their busy schedules to assist the study team.

General Observations

A major philosophical contradiction resulted from the difference in role orientation of those staff members directly involved with truants. In spite of the concern and compassion expressed by the attendance personnel, their efforts are often undermined by the need to "process" students. The question arises, "How can a high school balance its desire to give each

child every opportunity possible to remain in high school against the requirement to clear the register of truants and dropouts mandated by Central Board auditors?" As the attendance coordinator explained, "We work to the letter of the law, and then we are criticized and labeled a high dropout school."

Although it was emphasized to the study team that this school regarded even one dropout as a tragedy, a steady stream of discharges moved through the attendance office during the three days of interviewing. When questioning the frequent and automatic assignment of the "39" dropout code (over seventeen years of age), utilized even if a student seemed interested in an alternative setting, the study team was told that the Central Board will not permit the use of any other code without written proof that the student has been accepted by another program.

At issue here is, "How should the school work to retain the students and thereby prevent them from being given the 'over seventeen' code and dismissed? Once that code is assigned, the home school is absolved of further responsibility to educate them, and it is not known how many ever enter an alternative educational setting. Since neither approximate figures nor percentages were available, the study team could not determine how many students over seventeen were able to transfer to alternative high schools where they could still receive a regular diploma, and where the class schedule is lighter, the classes smaller, and personal attention greater.

Additionally, the related issue of "in-school dropouts" needs to be addressed. Perhaps the enormity of this problem overwhelms school officials, and the course of least resistance is to wait until the student reaches seventeen, when he can be transferred to a GED program. However, an attendance coordinator said that by that time, a student may have lost interest in school.

"We try to get kids into the GED programs as early as sixteen-and-a-half, but the GED programs won't take them because it is 'double registering' and not to their program's advantage," the coordinator explained. "They don't get credit for the kid until he actually turns seventeen and move him from the roll."

This conflict of interest is detrimental to the student and may result in a "dropout tragedy" for technical reasons. The "under seventeen" truant who keeps appearing on the computer, receiving TELSOL calls, and being visited by the attendance teacher occasionally is still a student in limbo. Apparently, his only option is to enroll in an alternative high school, for which the study team was told he rarely qualifies.

Regarding the channels of communication between the regular high schools, the alternative educational settings, and OSIS, one attendance staff member said, "There is none. We never hear from the other school when one of our students enrolls. And OSIS never tells us where any of our students are until after our books are closed and it is too late for us to correct our figures."

The organization and function of the OSIS office at the Central Board remains a mystery. As far as could be determined, the high school attendance personnel do not have the names, office addresses, or telephone numbers of OSIS staff, nor do the high schools appear to understand the organizational structure of OSIS and its relationship to other attendance reporting offices. There appears to be no monthly reporting from OSIS of year-to-date statistics on dropouts and transfers. The attendance coordinator felt that OSIS was self-serving and unidirectional, another burdensome layer in the bureaucracy that demands much and offers little in return.

The expectation that OSIS numbers would obviate the need for Department of Human resources face-to-face letters has not been realized, nor has OSIS served to improve the accuracy of attendance figures by promptly reporting the whereabouts of students incorrectly labeled "dropout" or "not found." The burden of tracking the discharged student is still upon the former school. The inadequacy of the partially-complete OSIS computerized system may prevent OSIS from properly serving its "clients," the schools, and may also contribute to the unnecessary inflation of dropout figures.

The mission of the New York City alternative high schools also remains a grey area. During interviews, conflicting information was received. It was alternately stated that alternative high schools were overcrowded or underenrolled; willing to deal with truants or disinterested in them, responsive to the needs of students over seventeen or oblivious to them, and an integral part of the New York City educational system or a satellite far removed from it. According to one attendance teacher, the alternative high schools used to be a "revolving door" operation with their students eventually falling by the wayside. The pendulum, however, may have swung too far in the other direction, with these schools now functioning as small, almost "elite" institutions that are unwilling or unable to play anything more than a minor role in solving the dropout problem.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are offered regarding specific areas for improvement in this school:

1. Achieve fuller computerized integration of all attendance reporting, including the OSIS reports, so that forms and verification reports need not be filled out or checked manually. This can be achieved by developing "boilerplates" of all NYC forms and filling them out on the computer terminal, or by calling up students files and printing them out to verify OSIS data.
2. Post security personnel at the cafeteria doors during lunch periods to check student schedules as they enter the room. Clear the cafeteria of all students at the end of each period. These or similar measures would discourage use of the cafeteria as a

lounge for the "in-school dropouts" and "roamers".

3. Remove the names of chronically truant students from the list for daily TELSOL calls. These students need individual attention, such as personal telephone calls to their parents, not a recorded message a few times each month. Not only would this facilitate earlier identification of these students, it would also promote early familial awareness of the truancy.
4. Rethink the ways in which the six deans of students are utilized. Apparently, students may be brought to the deans' office by security officers only to find that the dean has left to teach a class. This prevents the deans from being able to deal with many pressing problems. Perhaps the deans' schedules could be revised, or a rotation plan devised to allow them to cover for one another so that their offices are never left unoccupied. Ideally the deans should carry full-time administrative assignments.
5. Ask teachers to refrain from issuing bathroom passes to students who "disappear" to the cafeteria for 15 minutes or more each day. Teachers know from experience that students are abusing this privilege.

Conclusion

It is evident that little significant improvement can occur in the dropout rate without an infusion of personnel and funds to give at risk students individual attention. Without such a boost, dropout studies will forever remain merely exercises in finding new ways to count those already fallen by the wayside. Schools with high dropout rates cannot be expected to function with the same ancillary staff and the same budgets as schools with low dropout rates. While it is not reasonable to expect an administration to divert resources from students who attend school willingly and eagerly to those who participate only sporadically, it is precisely those truants who are so direly in need of early identification and special attention.

Appendix F

COMPARISON OF HIGH AND LOW DROPOUT
SCHOOLS IN THREE BOROUGHES

This appendix provides a more complete account of the findings of the study team reported in Part Two. In an effort to confirm the findings of Part One, the data collected from the high schools were analyzed by making comparisons between schools with high and low dropout rates in each of three boroughs (The Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens). Initially, a comparison was to have been made between schools in each of the five boroughs. However, in selecting schools for this study, the data provided in the Board of Education Directory of High Schools and the Board's report of dropout rates did not indicate that there were comprehensive, zoned high schools in Manhattan or Staten Island with sufficient contrasts in their dropout rates to be analyzed.

It was determined that on Staten Island, all the schools had approximately the same dropout rate; therefore, they could not be categorized on the basis of high and low dropout rates. In Manhattan, because there are so many specialized high schools, it was difficult to find a comprehensive high school with a low dropout rate to be compared with the one with the high dropout rate. In fact, the only comprehensive high school that had a low dropout rate was presently an all girls' school. It was clear that the student body of the school with the high dropout rate was not similar to that of the school with the low dropout rate.

This appendix is organized as follows:

- Appendix F1 Queens
- Appendix F2 Brooklyn
- Appendix F3 The Bronx

As in previous sections of the report, the following topics are discussed in Appendices F1, F2, and F3: Attendance Procedures; Admissions and Discharges; Absences, Truancy and Suspensions; Automated or Manual Student Accounting System; and Identification of At-Risk Students.

Appendix F1

Comparison of High and Low Dropout Schools
in Queens

Attendance Procedures

The contrast between high schools with high and low dropout rates is striking. The high dropout school is twice the size of the other, with at least four times the number of students absent each day. The vast amount of data its attendance office must process daily is overwhelming. Out of an enrollment of 4,600 only about 3,400 attend each day.

Overall, not only does the staff of the attendance office at the high dropout school have more duties to perform than the one at the low dropout school, but their responsibilities are also divided differently. At the low dropout school, most of the record-keeping tasks are assigned to a secretary, while the role of the attendance coordinator is to help students. At the high dropout school, the record-keeping tasks are more varied. Two secretaries do most of the work, although paraprofessionals also assist.

At the high dropout school, the attendance coordinator is primarily responsible for running the UAPC system and is more involved with record keeping. The major concerns of the staff at this school are related to keeping the records in order and making sure the figures balance for the auditors. The needs of students appear not to be of central importance. However, this seeming disinterest in student welfare may be the result, of having to deal with large numbers of students who are themselves disinterested in school or only view it as a way to receive welfare benefits. The demands of a system such as this naturally inspire a degree of a cynicism about the motives of students and their regard for school.

Admissions and Discharges

Data indicate that there is a backlog of cases of students over seventeen who have stopped attending school. Additionally, students who are over sixteen but under seventeen and have stopped attending school cannot legally be dropped from the register even though there is no legal means to require such students to attend.

Neither of the pupil accounting secretaries appeared to compare the dropout statistics generated by the Board with those from her individual school. They are not required to do so, and have heavy workloads without being expected to perform this function as well.

Ironically, the high dropout school, with the heavier demands on its attendance office, assigned more tasks to its employees than did the low dropout school. At the high dropout school, the attendance secretary deals with students who cut classes, screens for admissions, and works on at

least the initial phases of readmittance. At the low dropout school, these functions are performed by personnel of the guidance office.

Absences, Truancy and Suspensions

No one in either of the attendance offices had much interest in or knowledge of the suspension process. Disciplinary matters were considered the concern of the dean or principal.

At both schools, the staffs were disinclined to enforce truancy guidelines and deadlines rigidly. At the high dropout school, although truancy reports were filed after a student had fifteen to twenty absences, it was indicated that these reports were not up to date. Since the attendance teacher, who appeared to be solely responsible for dealing with these students, had more work than she could do, there appeared to be a general reluctance to burden her with more 407s.

At the low dropout school, the attendance coordinator was also vague about how long it takes her to file a report, but she stated that after ten days of absence, she reports students to the attendance teacher and starts trying to establish contact with them. She does, however, attempt to communicate with students before they miss ten days (when they are observed to have mildly irregular attendance patterns, or when a teacher reports a student to her).

Automated Student Accounting

Both schools use the UAPC system, although the level of sophistication differs. The person at the low dropout school seemed to have a much better understanding of the kinds of jobs the system could be used to accomplish. However, the system was not regarded as totally accurate since it sometimes does not record all the data entered. Both schools, therefore, must rely on a manual back-up system.

According to personnel of the high dropout school, the UAPC system does not keep up with the processing needs at peak times. The attendance coordinator at the high dropout school indicated that when there are large numbers of admissions or discharges, these must be sent to the UAPC office where the information is entered centrally. One shortcoming of the system is that UAPC is not consistent with some of the information required in the OSIS and other Central Board reports.

The low dropout school experienced no problem with UAPC processing at peak times, nor did they appear to use the system to assign students to classes after the schedules are made at the beginning of the semester. Since there are few walk-ins at the low dropout school, the register is known the semester before. Once class lists are compiled, the pupil accounting secretary manually assigns walk-ins to classes and then reports the information to UAPC.

Two pupil accounting secretaries felt that OSIS personnel were patient and helpful, and that OSIS requests for information revisions were clear.

Neither expressed much concern about problems with duplicate OSIS numbers or with students being registered twice. Although these system-wide problems are of concern to the Central Board, they are not a priority to schools faced with more immediate concerns.

The people working on TELSOL spent a great deal of time entering manually large numbers of students' phone numbers every day. The school with the high dropout rate did not have a computer terminal in the attendance office. This kept the coordinator away from the office most of the day, and also meant that no one working in the office could call up student records at their desks, as they could at the low dropout school.

At-Risk and Special Problem Population

Conditions at the low dropout school in regard to problem populations are strikingly different than at the high dropout school. At the high dropout school, there appears to be a connection between the high absence rate and a high percentage of Hispanic students, some of whom are very mobile and erratic in their attendance. Also, a number of these students—approximately 500—come to school primarily to get the letter for Social Services indicating that they have attended school at least five days in three months. Attempts to drop these students from the register are followed by angry calls from parents. In contrast, the population at the low dropout school is quite stable. Relatively few of its students are truants.

At the high dropout school, no one mentioned being informed when students enroll in GED programs or earn GEDs from other settings. When an alternative program requests a student's records, a photocopy is sent out and the originals are kept at the school. In such cases, the students do not remain on the school register while they are attending another program. It seems that some of these do not require the records of students in order to work with them. At the high dropout school, there seemed to be no one who called the alternative centers regularly or who had established any lines of communication between schools. At the low dropout school, any contacts made are the result of the efforts of one person. At the school with the high dropout rate, no one makes that effort.

Appendix F2

Comparison of High and Low Dropout Schools
in BrooklynAttendance Procedures

Daily attendance taking routines in the two schools vary considerably in terms of the personnel used, where attendance is recorded (Daily Record book or rollbooks), and the method in which it is recorded (manual or automated). The categories for which attendance is tracked also differ. The low dropout school has a co-op work study program and the school with the high dropout rate does not. The low dropout school also keeps a separate count by gender of daily absence whereas the high dropout school does not.

The high dropout school has two pupil accounting secretaries whose jobs seem comparable to that of their counterpart at the low dropout school. Although at the high dropout school, one of the secretaries is nominally in charge of admissions and the other takes care of discharges, in practice they do both. Both also oversee the daily attendance taking and prepare the attendance related OSIS reports. At the low dropout school, these functions are fulfilled by the one school secretary.

The high dropout school has larger volumes of admissions, discharges, and inter-class transfers. At this school, the attendance office is the hub—the place where visitors stop first, where parents come to check up on their children, and where teachers obtain the daily schedule. Unlike the low dropout school, here all attendance transactions are done manually. In contrast, the low dropout school secretary is isolated in a private office. She is accessible only to school personnel who have specific questions about attendance records, which prevents her from being interrupted. She also has the advantage provided by the UAPC system. Nevertheless, at the peak time (September-October) she finds she must stay overtime or take work home.

Both schools were similar in their conscientiousness about record keeping. Despite the heavy workload, the secretaries seemed to understand all the procedures and to try very hard to get the work done quickly and accurately. For both, the hectic rush of September-October (between the opening day of school and the time when the October 31 Reorganization Report is accepted in mid-November) was overwhelming. That is when the most mistakes are made, such as omitting items from students records or miscopying OSIS identification numbers. Another similarity between the schools was the way OSIS attendance related reports were handled—they both use the same codes, procedures, and deadlines.

In summary, internal record-keeping procedures in regard to daily attendance vary, but through OSIS the Board of Education has imposed uni-

form codes and procedures for its monthly and periodic reports. Both schools followed the standardized procedures, with one exception: the low dropout school considers a student an LTA if he or she has been absent twenty consecutive days in a month, while at the high dropout school a student must be out an entire month before being classified as an LTA.

Admissions and Discharges

Most new admissions in both schools are list-notice applicants from their respective feeder schools. Both schools also have a significant number of over-the-counter admissions in September, and, to a lesser extent, in February. It appears that due to the more transient character of its student body, the high dropout school has proportionately more walk-in admissions.

The school with the high dropout rate has a steady stream of admissions and readmissions throughout the year, while the low dropout school had fewer than one hundred. In addition to the usual problem populations (e.g., students who go to the Caribbean and students who enroll only to get face-to-face letters), the high dropout school also reported having students who transfer back and forth between neighboring high schools. For the low dropout school, this was not a problem.

An additional admissions problem for the high dropout school was the amount of work required for admitting students to the Educational Options Program. The low dropout school also has an Educational Options Program, but did not report a great deal of paperwork in connection with it.

The two schools contrast sharply in the number of discharges made annually. The higher discharge rate of the high dropout school can probably be attributed to the student populations, rather than to any difference in procedures or personnel. It has a much more transient population, including students who go to the Caribbean and then return weeks, months, or even a few years later; and students who remain on register to comply with welfare department regulations.

Both schools characterize their typical dropout as an overage under-achiever. The high dropout school is located in a poorer, less stable neighborhood and may well have more low-achieving LTAs. These students can only be discharged officially after reaching the age of seventeen; this may be another factor contributing to the high rate of over-seventeen discharges at the high dropout school.

Neither school is notified when their students enter or complete a GED program in another school, unless that school happens to request the student's records. The schools have different policies as to when the secretary assigns one of the student discharge codes to a student entering a private school. The high dropout school discharges the student to a private school when the student shows a letter of admission; the low dropout school does so only if the other school requests the student's records in writing. Neither school relies on verification by the attendance teacher, although the report on Dropouts from New York City Public Schools 1982-83 suggests that this is necessary for code "08" (business school) and sometimes for code "25" (beauty school).

Absences, Truancy and Suspensions

Both schools use the TELSOL machine to notify parents after their child has been absent for one day. At the high dropout school, parent response has declined since the machine was installed last spring. Because homeroom teachers must handwrite the phone numbers of students to be called, not all student numbers were being entered into the machine. At the low dropout school, the UAPC system also sends out postcards when students are absent.

Both schools have part-time attendance teachers (the low dropout school for three days a week, and the high dropout school for three to four days a week). The attendance teacher at the high dropout school has a much heavier caseload. It was interesting to note that the attendance teacher at the low dropout school seemed more eager to discharge students than the one at the high dropout school. They did agree that the available educational alternatives (auxiliary and alternative schools) are inadequate for several reasons: geographic location, entrance requirements, and unimaginative programs. Nor did they think that the legal remedies such as PINs petitions in Family Court have any impact on the truancy problems.

In both schools, there are paraprofessionals who make home visits when students are absent. They are attached to particular funded programs such as PREP or SOAR.

Suspended students are in a special category that some staff members describe as "being in limbo". They are usually not allowed to return to their home school, but they cannot be discharged officially until they reach the age of seventeen.

Automated Student Accounting

The pupil accounting secretaries and the school secretary all report a similar relationship with OSIS. They saw OSIS as continually demanding new reports, for which they had to provide the same information OSIS already had, but each time in slightly different form. This spring, OSIS asked them to make corrections in student records dating back to 1981. In some cases, this was an impossible task that the schools resented.

They did report satisfaction with the new OSIS system of providing a list of identification numbers to issue to new students, and with the new OSIS hotline. In both schools, human error in copying numbers reportedly created more problems than duplicate OSIS numbers. At one time, OSIS had promised to take over the issuance of face-to-face letters, a change both schools would find desirable; but this never came about. Now, at the high dropout school, there is a constant stream of parents asking for face-to-face letters, whether they are entitled to them or not. Dealing with these requests causes constant interruptions, wastes time, and drains energy, and occasionally leads to altercations. At the low dropout school, the UAPC system makes attendance and cutting figures available much more quickly than before. These figures, in turn, make it possible to keep the official

register (which is still recorded manually) more up-to-date. The UAPC system also provides some of the numbers needed for the monthly and periodic OSIS reports. Nonetheless, the addition of new reports and new categories of student attendance that must be tracked means that the secretarial workload has increased considerably in the past thirteen years.

The school with the high dropout rate is scheduled to go on the UAPC system next September.

Identification of At-Risk Students

Both schools have similar criteria for identifying at-risk students. Three major categories are entering students who have been absent twenty-five or more days the previous year, pregnant girls, and students approaching or over seventeen who possess very few of the credits required to graduate. Both schools have PREP programs and special classes for holdover students. In addition, the high dropout school has an in-house GED program and has been promised a LYFE (in-house child care) center. Both these programs are rather small however, in view of the enormity of the problem.

Appendix F3

Comparison of High and Low Dropout Schools
in The Bronx

Attendance Procedures

The low dropout school, with a population that is 39% smaller than the high dropout school, has more people working in the attendance office. They have one and a half more secretaries, a full-time family assistant, and the same allotment of time from the attendance teacher. This is disproportionate as the attendance personnel at the high dropout school has more responsibilities than their counterparts. Because allocation of personnel is the prerogative of the principal, there is great disparity among the schools.

The practice of issuing absence lists before 12:00 noon allows for better pupil accountability. Action on absences begins the same day with phone calls and visits. This immediacy discourages cutting, which is often the first step in the dropout process.

Admissions and Discharge Procedures

The low dropout school has two full-time secretaries in admissions and discharge, while the high dropout school has only one. The admission and discharge procedures appeared to be the same in both schools. It is important to note, however, that filling out forms is a misuse of counselors' time. Time spent with paperwork reduces the number of students that can be seen by a counselor, which is already low at the high dropout school.

The staff at the high dropout school listed many more reasons for students leaving school. Thirty percent of the school population in the high dropout school entered after September 1, and thirty percent were discharged. In the low dropout school, fifteen percent entered after September 1 and twenty-one percent left.

Absences, Truancy and Suspensions

The schools had different procedures for dealing with high absences, suspensions, and truancy. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the high dropout school has 3,800 students while the low dropout school has 2,350. In spite of additional personnel, the task of establishing rapport with students, controlling their movement, maintaining security, and developing a sense of belonging and a positive feeling for the school was far more difficult at the high dropout school.

There was a great difference between the schools in terms of their percentages of long term absences as well as in the amount of personnel time allotted to deal with this problem.

Automated or Manual Student Accounting System

Satisfaction with the UAPC computer service was contingent upon the number of staff in the attendance office and their skill level. The large number of errors by the operators of the OSIS equipment and the absence of a link-up of the OSIS and UAPC were considered major problems by both schools, in that they resulted in manual duplication of computerized information.

Identification of At-Risk Students

In both schools the methods for dealing with at-risk students was determined on an individual basis. At the high dropout school, Hispanics had the highest dropout rate followed by Blacks and Southeast Asians. At the low dropout school, there was no difference in dropout percentages of the different ethnic groups.

Most of the students in both schools are members of ethnic minority groups. In the high dropout school, the predominant minority was Hispanic; in the low dropout school, it was Black. The significant difference was in the origin of the Hispanic population. In the high dropout school, most of the students had arrived recently from the Caribbean, while in the low dropout school, most were second or third generation "mainlanders."

The low dropout school had a significant number of students whose parents were in professions or blue collar jobs and a small group of welfare recipients. In the high dropout school, almost all the students' parents were welfare recipients living in low-income housing projects.

The educational level of the majority of parents of students in the high dropout school was below high school level. In the low dropout school, it was above high school level and included a number of college graduates. This difference was apparent in the attitude toward education and the aspiration level of parents for their children in the low dropout school. Their cooperation was very strong and contributed immeasurably to the holding power of the school.

APPENDIX G

COMPARISON OF SIX LARGE CITY SCHOOL SYSTEMS DROPOUT REPORTS

An Analysis of Definitions and Procedures

Introduction

Although there is great concern about the considerable number of young adults who have not completed high school, there have been few efforts to ascertain how school systems define dropouts and how they arrive at rates of completion. Many of our data on rates of completion come from national data gathering efforts such as the Census Bureau and the Department of Labor.

Another source of data is the National Center for Educational Statistics. The NCES data on dropouts are based on the annual number of high school graduates by state, compared with the number of freshmen enrolled four years earlier. This figure does not, of course, take into consideration back and forth migration or the number of students held back or advanced a grade during the period. Moreover, these data, may not be comparable if districts do not have the same definition of a dropout or similar methods for calculating rates of completion. Cooke, Ginsberg and Smith¹ report on these and other problems with national educational data. Thus, while we have information about the percentage of 22 year olds who have not received a high school diploma, we certainly cannot rely on national data for those who are 16.

As society looks for ways to hold school systems accountable for their educational efforts, strict attention should be given to how they measure such important indicators as school completion rates. Relatively small differences in such calculations can produce large differences in rates. Regardless of how they are identified, are special education students included in the rates? Are students attending night schools treated as dropouts? These are just two examples of the differences in definition that can account for rather large differences across systems and, consequently, different assessments of the degree to which systems are providing effective education.

Research on Dropouts

It should be noted that research on dropping out seems to follow a cyclical pattern. Even a cursory search of the literature reveals considerable activity during the late fifties and early sixties, and a rather sharp decline in more recent years. The problems of specific demographic groups have received attention, especially legislatively, but problems that cut across groups have not been addressed assiduously in the past fifteen years. The National Education Association publication, Dropout Studies: Design and Conduct,² illustrates the non-cumulative nature of educational knowledge. Many of the problems of consistency and comparability of reporting mentioned in this report are also cited in the twenty-year-old NEA

publication. Moreover, the 1965 document provides sufficient examples of ways to overcome the limitations of existing sources of data.

Objectives

In an effort to begin the investigation of these differences and the degree to which they exist, the following report presents information on how several large urban school systems define dropping out (or "early school leaving" as some systems describe it), how they process the information and how they arrive at rates of school completion. A summary of the major findings reported in the documents collected is also provided.

Method

School Systems Selected

Contact was established with six school systems in order to obtain their definition of a dropout, the procedures for collecting the necessary information for dropout statistics, and the methods used to determine the dropout rate. Appropriate school officials were consulted in the following cities: Boston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, San Diego and Chicago.

These cities were chosen because they are large, contain heterogeneous student populations, and have high proportions of students who are migrants or whose parents had recently emigrated. These criteria were chosen for several reasons. First, the dropout problem, although important in all districts, is especially acute in large, urban centers with heterogeneous populations. While national estimates of dropout rates range from eighteen to twenty-five percent of eighteen-year-olds,³ estimates from large cities are often twice these rates, and for some subgroups of urban students, rates have been reported as high as sixty percent or more.⁴ Second, recent research emphasizes the importance of limited English proficiency as a factor associated with early school leaving.⁵ Thus, districts with substantial numbers of immigrants from non-English-speaking countries or large groups of students whose native language is not English are likely to have higher dropout rates.

Finally, reports prepared by research and/or evaluation offices of five of these systems were obtained and are discussed below. In the case of Chicago, Officials in the Department of Research and Evaluation, Chicago Board of Education, recommended a report by the Chicago Panel on Public School Finances.⁶ It was prepared in cooperation with the Department of Research and Evaluation, which assured us that it contains the most accurate information available on Chicago dropouts.⁷ A study prepared by Designs for Change, an external advocacy group in Chicago, will also be cited. This study was reported in Education Week,⁸ and appears in the document, "The Bottom Line: Chicago's Failing Schools and How to Save Them".⁹

Obviously, not every district that meets the aforementioned criteria could be included in this paper. Although other districts were considered, their recent reports were not available or information could not be obtained by telephone. Nevertheless, the problems in the six cities chosen

are certainly shared by districts across the country.

Differences in Dropout Definitions

All school systems have long been concerned about the dropout problem, and the districts considered in this study were no exception. In some areas, this has become a political issue. In others, its high priority is the result of concerted efforts of state education authorities to improve the performance of schools under their jurisdiction. Whether it is entirely justified or not, the system receives the greater share of the blame when there is an increase in the percentage of students that fail to receive a high school diploma—now considered the lowest acceptable indicator of educational attainment. Another dimension to the problem is that there is wide variation in the high school graduation rates of demographically identifiable groups. This raises questions not only about the institutional effectiveness of our schools, but also about educational equity in our nation.

Dropout Identification

The question of how dropouts are identified and counted is important. Procedurally, all school systems considered begin the process at the building level, where an attendance secretary, or the equivalent, maintains records of attendance. When a student leaves school officially a notation is made of the reason. These notations are usually in code. Such codes can indicate a number of options e.g., transferred to another school, entered a private school, moved out of district, entered the military, found full time work, etc. The codes are standardized throughout each system and, along with other student records, coded notations are periodically relayed to the central offices where system-wide data are collected and processed. However, the thoroughness of such centralized record keeping, its currency, and its usefulness for student tracking and report generating vary, as does the availability of personnel to utilize such systems.

A problematic situation results when students do not formally withdraw from school. This can occur when they simply do not appear at the school to which they have been assigned. For example, a number of students who drop out do so during the summer, between academic years. Others stop attending without giving formal notice that they have withdrawn. How school officials classify these truants depends on the system of codes being used and on their efforts to follow up such students. "Not found" or a similar code is commonly included in the dropout statistics. How long a student may be truant before being classified as a dropout varies widely among districts.

Complexities of Dropout Reporting

As school systems have developed special schools and alternative programs, the collection of data for central record keeping has become very difficult. Consistency of reporting within as well as across districts becomes problematic. For example, some districts include special education students in their reports, while others do not. Some include all students enrolled in any type of program offered by the district, while others include only those enrolled in regular day high schools.

In some districts, transferring to a business or trade school is not considered dropping out, while in others it is—at least if the proprietary school does not offer a GED program. Also, as the structure of educational systems vary both within and between districts, there is no consistency in the grade levels. Some districts have regular four-year high schools, junior or intermediate schools that include the 9th grade, and senior high schools—all in the same district. Others have only one grade organization for all schools. The data in dropout reports sometimes cover only the 10th through 12th grades; others present data on the 9th through 12th grades of only the four-year high schools, leaving unreported the 9th grade students who drop out of junior high. The effects of these different definitions on dropout rates are not known, but they undoubtedly account for some of the variability among districts.

Variability in Calculating Dropout Rates

Variability in dropout rates has been aptly demonstrated by Dale Mann and his colleagues at Teachers College, Columbia University, in data presented at the National Invitational Conference on Holding Power and Dropouts.¹⁰ Dropout rates for eleven school districts varying widely in size and geographic location were included in the Conference Report. The one-year, cross-sectional rates ranged from .8% in St. Cloud, Minnesota, to 16% in Fort Worth, Texas. Size of district, however, seems not to be a primary factor as Houston (the seventh largest district in the United States) is reported to have a 5.4% rate, Cleveland (the 28th largest) a rate of 4.4%, and St. Louis (the 42nd largest) a rate of 15%. It should be noted that the accuracy of these data were questioned by both those who provided them and other conference participants.

School districts use different formulas to calculate their dropout rates. The most common procedure is simply to divide the number of dropouts by the total enrollment for the appropriate grade levels during a single year (a cross-sectional rate). Other districts follow cohorts, usually across the secondary school years. Still others provide projections from cross-sectional data to four-year rates.

Quality of Data Collection

It should be noted that the context in which data gathering and reporting take place has important implications for the quality of data collected. For example, one school official indicated that considerable pressure had been brought to bear on principals to keep the dropout rate low. It was suggested that performance evaluation systems for school managers in this district were used for this purpose. One way that rates were kept low was for building-level personnel to miscode intentionally students as "not found" when they were most likely true dropouts. A percentage of such students were coded as "transferred to private schools." Because there was no mechanism to share data between public and private institutions, such coding effectively meant that the deception could not be discovered. Thus, the recorded dropout rate was much lower than the actual one. Other students (who had in fact dropped out) were coded as having moved out of the district. Such widespread falsification led the central research office to discount the information provided by individual schools. The magnitude of distortion may have been sizable; one school in

this system reported an "official dropout rate" of 1.9%, but its actual rate was calculated by the central office as 58.3%.¹¹

The issue of data quality is critical because, although a central office may define a dropout, the definition must be adhered to at the point where data are generated initially. The extent of adherence is affected by intentional miscoding as well as by recording errors.

As state legislatures, their departments of education, local school boards and superintendents act to increase accountability and focus greater attention on attendance and retention, the demand for accurate data increases accordingly. Previously the lack of data, of whatever quality, had been cited as a problem. However, educational leaders may now be creating circumstances which produce plentiful data, but data of questionable quality. Because dropouts come predominantly from disadvantaged segments of the population, issues of equity are clearly involved, and these, among other issues, can lead to politicization of the problem. While it is hard to argue that such politicization is negative if it leads to action on this problem, it can also tempt administrators to be selective in what they report. Designers of school record keeping systems must be aware of the issue of integrity.

Findings By School Districts

Boston

The Boston Public Schools, the 37th largest district in the country, enrolled 62,989 students in the fall of 1981. Of this number, 30,733 were secondary school students.¹² During the 1978-79 school year, the most recent data available, the racial and ethnic composition of the student body was: 3% Asian, 12% Hispanic, 44% Black, and 40% White. A total of 11.5% of all students were identified as having limited proficiency in English.¹³

In Boston, any student who leaves school before graduating for one of the following reasons is considered a dropout: work, military service, marriage, being over 16, not reporting or other. Special education students as well as those enrolled in alternative schools are included in these figures. The rate reported in the "Drop-Out Information Paper"¹⁴ Office of Counseling and Pupil Services' is calculated by dividing the total number of high school (grades 9-12) dropouts for a school year by the total enrollment for that year. This cross-sectional rate for 1983-1984 was 14.2%. The rates for individual high schools vary from zero at Boston Latin Academy (a selective public school) to 24.5% at Dorchester High School (a comprehensive high school). By far, the largest number of dropouts was found in the over-sixteen-years-of-age category. Considering only male dropouts, the rates by race were White, 15.6%; Black, 14.7%; Hispanic, 19.9% and Asian, 11.4%. The corresponding rates for females were 12.8%, 13.7%, 14.7%, and 7.6%.

Los Angeles

The Los Angeles Unified School District, the second largest district in the country,¹⁵ enrolled 540,903 students in the fall of 1981. Of these, 161,907 of whom were secondary school students. The U.S. Department of Education¹⁶ reports that for the 1978-1979 school year Asians accounted for 6% of the student body; Hispanics, 38%; Blacks, 25%; and Whites, 30%. Those students with limited proficiency in English comprised 16.5% of all students.

The most recent data available from Los Angeles are for the academic year 1981-1982, and are reported in the document, "Early School Leavers: High School Students Who Left Before Graduating, 1981-1982."¹⁷ Only senior high school students are included (grades 10-12) in the report. The term dropout is not used by this school system; rather, they refer to "early school leavers." Those early school leavers who are included in the data were coded as follows: being overage, whereabouts being unknown, being employed full-time, institutionalized, having a medical excuse, being enlisted in the military, marriage and other. The other category included such reasons as non-attendance or excessive absence, in custody of parent at home or dropped to parent, deceased, expelled, child care, and miscellaneous. Miscellaneous included undercover agents, no statement, emancipated minor and run-away. The most frequent code was for being overage, with the whereabouts unknown a very close second and all others far behind.

Overall, the percentage of early school leavers was 7% of the total school enrollment for the year. Included in these numbers are students attending all types of secondary school programs. Males accounted for 55% of all dropouts. Hispanic students constituted 43%, and their cross-sectional rate was 8.6%; White students constituted 26%, and had a cross-sectional rate of 6.0%; Black students also comprised 26% of those identified as dropouts, with a rate of 7.6%; Asian students were 4%, with a rate of 7.4%.¹⁸

Miami

The Dade County school district enrolled 224,580 students in the fall of 1981, of whom 105,137 were in secondary schools. It is the fourth largest system in the country.¹⁹ According to the U.S. Department of Education,²⁰ the student body in 1978-1979 was comprised of 1% Asian students, 32% Hispanics, 29% Blacks, and 38% Whites. Students with limited proficiency in English accounted for 5.3% of the total enrollment.

The Miami report²¹ was different from other examined (except for the report prepared by a Chicago advocacy group, which is discussed below) in that it reported on a longitudinal study of the June, 1980, eighth grade cohort followed through February 1985. All students who were in the eighth grade in June 1980 were included. The definition of dropout was any student who left the 9th-12th grade program before completing a program of studies and receiving either a certificate of completion or a diploma. Exceptional students, retained students, "no shows" from one school year to another and those whose parents are not citizens were included. Excluded from the data were those who graduated, are still enrolled, transferred to another

school, died, were remanded to the custody of the Courts or a private agency, or were expelled. About 29.5% of all those included had dropped out by the end of the follow-up period. The rate for Whites was 26.4%; for Blacks, 33.9%; for Hispanics, 29.3%; and for Asians, 19.0%. For males, the rate was 32.1%; for females, 26.8%.²²

Several other findings from this study are worth noting. For example, the researchers found that the largest percentage of dropouts occurred during the freshman and sophomore years;²³ that being overage in the eighth grade (as a consequence of being held back in earlier grades) was very strongly associated with dropping out.²⁴ Of those students who do drop out, a large number do so during the summer.²⁵ This report, however, does not provide information on school leaving codes used by this system. Thus, there are no data from which to assess reasons for dropping out or to report what young people did after leaving school.

New York City

The New York City school system, the largest in the country by far, enrolled 924,123 students in the fall of 1981, of whom 469,263 were at the secondary school level.²⁶ Data from the U.S. Department of Education²⁷ for 1978-1979 reveal that 3% of New York's total enrollment was Asian, 30% Hispanic, 39% Black and 29% White. Almost 10% of the total enrollment was classified as having limited proficiency in English.

The report prepared by the Office of Student Information Services, "Dropouts From New York City Public Schools, 1982-1983,"²⁸ is the most thorough of those reviewed for this report. It provided more information on how the data were collected and what procedures were used for compiling the statistics. Where prior reports had included only students discharged as dropouts from day high schools, the NYCBE report includes as well all 9th through 12th grade students who dropped out of intermediate and junior high schools; all students who left special education programs without a diploma; and all those who dropped out of retrieval settings, such as pre-GED and GED programs, schools for pregnant teens, substance abuse programs, and literacy programs.

The term dropout is defined as any student who left the school system in the 1982-1983 school year prior to graduation, and who did not enter another educational setting leading to a high school diploma within the same year. Students who re-enrolled were not counted as dropouts, but those who entered a business school program that did not lead to a diploma were. The discharge codes identifying dropouts are as follows: age 17 or over with parental consent (the New York City Schools are mandated to provide a high school education for all residents up to the age of 22, although the minimum age of voluntary withdrawal is 17 with parental consent); employment (requires a certificate and parental consent and can be obtained after age 16); not found; and transferred to business or trade school. Not included in the dropout category are students who graduated, transferred, were institutionalized, entered college early, entered high school equivalency programs or attended other (auxiliary) Board-sponsored programs. For students from schools below the high school level, the primary code was "not found," with a very few designated as left in order to work, or over 17.

The rates calculated in the report are survival rates. For example, there were 39,040 dropouts during the 1982-1983 school year and a 9th-12th grade enrollment in the intermediate and high schools of 309,784. Thus, 12.6% dropped out, and 87.4% remained in school. Multiplying the survivor proportion by four yields a value of 58.4%, the survivor rate, and 41.6% as the projected four-year dropout rate. When only high school students are included, the rate drops to 11.4%, with a four-year projected rate of 38.4%.²⁹

By dropout codes, the report states that among the day high school dropouts, 9.4% entered employment, business or trade schools or the military; 8.9% were reported to have transferred to auxiliary or outreach centers but did not enroll in them; 74.2% left at age 17 or over; and 7.5% were not found after a search by the Attendance Bureau.³⁰

By grade level, the largest group, 31.4% exited in the 10th grade, 25.2% in the 9th grade; 20.8% in the 11th grade, and 14.6% in the 12th grade. About 6.1% were special education students not categorized by grade level, and 1.9% did not have their grade level recorded.³¹

Males comprised 55.8% of these dropouts, and females accounted for 44.1%.³² By year of birth,³³ almost 20% of the dropouts were born in 1963 or before, which would have made them almost 19-years-old in September of 1983. Seventeen was the most common age of dropouts (38.4%), but 17.6% were 16 and 23.8% were 18.

The report includes no other personal information on students, so racial or ethnic differences are not available. Although a racial and ethnic census is taken by the system, the records of individual students do not include such information. However, school-by-school data are reported, and range from a low of .5% at two selective high schools (Stuyvesant High School and The Bronx High School of Science) to 24.9% at a comprehensive high school (Roosevelt).

San Diego

San Diego City Unified Schools, the 14th largest district in the country, enrolled 110,904 students in the fall of 1981, of whom 33,465 were in secondary schools.³⁴ The U.S. Department of Education³⁵ reported that for 1978-1979, Asians comprised 7% of the total enrollment; Hispanics, 16%; Blacks, 15%; and Whites, 62%. A total of 4.5% of enrollees were classified as having limited English proficiency.

The San Diego report³⁶ was the only one to include student performance data and information about special advantages and/or disadvantages that characterized its school leavers. The report itself is based on data from 1982-1983, is cross-sectional, reports a "school leaver" rate of 4.5%, and projects a cumulative attrition rate over four years of 16.5%.³⁷ The definition of "school leaver" is any student who participated in any grade (9-12) during the school year, had the ability to meet graduation requirements or pass the California High School Proficiency Examination, did not transfer to another school or certified program, and did not re-enter the

system by October 1983. Males comprised 54% of all school leavers. The rates for specific groups are as follows: Hispanics, 7.4%; Whites, 3.8%; Blacks, 5.1%; and Asian/Pacific Islanders, 6.8%.³⁸

School leavers were categorized according to their reason for leaving as follows: whereabouts unknown, 41.6%; married, 3.6%; withdrew-under 18, 10.5%; withdrew-over 18, 13.4%; full-time employment, 17.0%; mental condition, 10.2%; hardship, 0.5%; pregnant, 3.1%.³⁹

By age, 3.2% of those leaving were 13/14 years old; 13.1% were 15; 23.7% were 16; 30.5% were 17; 26.0% were 18; and 3.4% were 19 to 20. By grade level, 3.8% of freshmen left; 4.6% of sophomores; 6.6% of juniors; and 2.6% of seniors.⁴⁰

Regarding student performance, the findings are consistent with previous research. Early leaving is far more characteristic of those students who are not meeting academic expectations than for those who are doing average work or better. Seventy percent of those who left school had scholastic averages of 2.0 (on a four point scale) or below; over one-half were below 1.5 and over one-fourth were below 1.0. On the other hand, 7% of leavers had averages over 3.0.⁴¹

Students with limited proficiency in English had higher dropout rates (7.5%) than those who were fluent in English. Hispanic students accounted for 15.5% of the students enrolled and had a dropout rate of 7.4%. Hispanics with limited proficiency in English were .9% of the student population, but left at a rate of 12.5%. The differences are also striking for Indochinese students. They comprised 6.3% of the total enrollment, and the Indochinese with limited proficiency in English were 4.1% of the student population. These LEP students left at a rate of 5.2%, while those fluent in English had a rate of 1.3%, the lowest for any group observed in the course of the study.⁴²

Additional data are provided for students enrolled in special programs for the advantaged (gifted, etc.) and for those who had disadvantages not mentioned previously in the report (handicapping conditions,) a record of suspensions, low reading scores, etc.). The data for these groups are consistent with the labels associated with the variables: students in gifted, magnet, and other programs associated with academic success or those who had high GPA's had low dropout rates. In contrast, students who had been unsuccessful in meeting school expectations or had other disadvantages were far more likely to leave school before obtaining a diploma.

Chicago

The Chicago City Schools enrolled 442,889 students in the fall of 1981, of whom 125,255 were at the secondary level. It is the third-largest district in the country.⁴³ The U.S. Department of Education⁴⁴ reported that for the 1978-1979 school year, the student body of Chicago's public schools was 2% Asian, 16% Hispanic, 61% Black, and 22% White. Those students identified as having limited proficiency in English were not reported.

As noted earlier, the dropout report for Chicago discussed below was prepared by the Chicago Panel on Public School Finances⁴⁵ in cooperation with the Department of Research and Evaluation of the Chicago Board of Education. Thus, it differs from the other reports discussed here in that it was sponsored by an outside advocacy group. However, the report was recommended by personnel in the Board of Education who assisted with the data analysis.⁴⁶

"Dropouts from Chicago Public Schools" provides a longitudinal analysis of the high school classes of 1982, 1983 and 1984. The class of 1982 (which entered the high schools as freshmen in 1978) received the most attention, but comparisons are also made between their dropout rates and those of the later classes. The 1982 class is studied most intensively because the researchers found that at the end of four years, 10% of this group was still enrolled in the public schools. Thus, a complete analysis of this class required the inclusion of data from later years. The report follows the 1982 students until September 1984, over two years beyond their normal graduation date.

Because there has been controversy in Chicago about the dropout rate and the methods by which it is calculated categorizations of dropouts are very explicit in this report. Only those students who transferred to legitimate secondary schools outside of the public system are eliminated from the analysis. Even this exclusion, however, raises questions. The researchers report that the follow-up efforts of the system are not vigorous enough to verify that such transfers are actually enrolled; thus, this modification of the base may serve to decrease the actual dropout rate.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, 85% of all members of the class of 1982 attended only one school and remained in the public system. The 1982 class was composed of 33,142 students, of whom 140 were still active in the system as of September 1984, and 3,060 had transferred out. Of the remaining 29,942, 12,804 were classified as dropouts, for a longitudinal rate of 42.8%, and 17,138 had graduated for a graduation rate of 57.2%.⁴⁸

The report also provides data on dropouts by demographic characteristics: age, race and ethnicity, reading scores and gender. Some of the rates are calculated from combinations of these variables, but extensive multivariate analyses are not provided.

Age was found to be an important variable associated with the dropout rate. High school freshmen are typically 14 years of age, and those who entered high school at this age dropped out at a rate of 37%. For those who entered at 13 years of age, the rate was 26%. These two age groups accounted for 74.4% of the entering freshman class. However, for those freshmen who were 15 years of age or older in 1978 (25.6% of the class), their eventual dropout rate was 59.9%. For those who were 16 or older, the rate was 68.8%. The percentage of the class who entered at these last two age levels was 23% and 3%, respectively.⁴⁹

By reading level, the rate of dropouts is linear. For those students at or above the normal reading level (47% of the class) when they entered high school, 23% had dropped out (e.g., not graduated or transferred) by September 1984.⁵⁰ For those eighth grade students whose reading scores were at the 4.7th to 6.7th grade level, the dropout rate was 49.9%, and for

those whose scores were lower than that, the rate was 67.8%. These two groups comprised, respectively, 33.6% and 13.1% of the entering freshman class in 1978.⁵¹

Considering gender, the differences were consistent with national data and those of other cities. Males dropped out more frequently than females, with a 49.2% rate for the former as opposed to 36.2% for the latter.

By race or ethnicity, Black students comprised 63% of the class, and their dropout rate was 45.1%; Whites made up 22% and had a dropout rate of 34.5%; Hispanic students were 14% and dropped out at a rate of 46.9%; and Asian students were 2% and dropped out at a rate of 19.4%.⁵²

The report finds that entering high school overage (e.g., 15 or older) is an especially potent predictor for dropping out, especially for males. More males than females are held back a year or more in elementary school. Instead of increasing their likelihood of finishing school it has the opposite effect: it increases the probability of their dropping out. The effect of being overage is further increased if the student reads below grade level and/or is Black. The dropout rate for Black males who enter at age 16 or over is 77%; for Black males who enter at age 15, the rate is 63%. These two groups comprise 16.8% of the class of 1982 and 25% of the dropouts.⁵³

Interestingly, the effects of entering high school at an older age were not the same for Hispanics, nor were they as dramatic for Whites or Asians. The authors speculate that language difficulties might account in part for some Hispanics being held back and that this does not carry the stigma or represent the degree of failure that being held back for reasons not related to language did for Blacks.⁵⁴

By schools, the dropout rates varied from 62.6% at a 100% Black school, where 37.6% entered overage and only 40.3% entered with normal reading scores, to 10.8% at a school with 95.7% White students, 82.7% of whom were reading at grade level or above. As one might expect, the latter school had few students from poverty level families (9.0%), while the former school had many (73.2%). Systematic analyses of student body characteristics, performance and dropout rates were not provided for the schools although much individual school information is presented. From an inspection of these data, however, while the ranking of schools by dropout rates compares closely with the proportion of at-risk students they serve, there are schools that do better or worse than would be expected on the basis of student body characteristics alone. Clearly, these data, although under-analyzed, inspire a degree of optimism about the possibilities of interventions at the school level, which may lower the dropout rates.

A report prepared by Designs for Change, a non-profit advocacy group in Chicago, reports that 47% of the 1980 freshman class, "...failed to complete high school within the public school system" (and about eight percent probably transferred or moved away).⁵⁵ The rates for predominantly Black and Hispanic high schools were 65% and 64%, respectively.⁵⁶ Precise information on which school leaving codes are included in dropout statistics is not available, nor is information on whether all groups of students and schools (e.g., alternative or special education schools) are included.

These data lack the precision of those provided by the Chicago Panel on Public School Finances; nevertheless, they are generally in agreement.

Conclusions

No Standard Definition

The most important conclusion of this paper is that there is no single or standard definition of a dropout used by the school systems considered. Moreover, rates are calculated differently and include different data. Under these circumstances, comparisons across school districts must be made very carefully, and only when there is some assurance that data or rates have been adjusted to account for the differences noted here. Such adjustments are often impossible.

However, there is much to be learned from the reports of school districts, in terms of how they gather and process information as well as from the content of their reports. In this regard, special reference should be made of the Miami and Chicago reports, both of which provide information not available elsewhere. Furthermore, the San Diego report, although cross-sectional, contains a variety of information not found in the other reports and provides an illustration of the analytical benefits to be derived from a full data base on students.

Specifically, the availability of data on students' backgrounds, achievements, and discipline allows for more detailed analyses than were reported by other cities. It may well be that such data were available in at least some of the other systems, but the willingness or interest to utilize the data fully for such reports was not present. Both of these documents illustrate the value of using such annual or periodic reports not only for accountability or evaluation purposes but also to provide useful information for program design and implementation and for generating basic research.

Effect of Overage Youngsters on the Dropout Rate

One substantive finding that appears in several of these reports bears repeating. Students who are overage when they enter high school are far more likely to drop out than are their classmates of normal age. School policies on promotion and holding back need to be reconsidered carefully. With this in mind it is clear that being overage is associated with other indicators of school problems and, thus, it is not in and of itself a variable for which policy manipulation will yield great results. Nevertheless, the evidence provided by these reports casts doubt on the positive effects on holding students back. Moreover, students who enter a system overage, having been held back in elementary or junior high schools, are known to have encountered difficulty in school. They can easily be identified as at-risk and targeted for special attention, which they might not receive otherwise.

National Dropout Statistics

Although it is very difficult to compare the reports summarized here, it is useful to bear in mind the information on dropouts provided by national surveys. The November 1983, Bulletin on "High School Dropouts: Descriptive Information from High School and Beyond,"⁵⁷ issued by the National Center for Educational Statistics reports data from a longitudinal study begun in 1980. It states that about 14% of 1980 high school sophomores left school during or after their sophomore year. Of these, 47% left in their junior year, 29% in their senior year, and 24% in their sophomore year. Males had a dropout rate of 15%, and females, 13%. American Indians and Alaskan natives had the highest rate, over 29%; Hispanics, 18%; Blacks, 17%; Whites, 12%; and Asians, 3%. Students whose self-reported grades were "mostly D's or below" had a 42.5% rate; those receiving "mostly C's," 18.5%; "mostly B's," 8.1%; and "mostly A's," 2.9%.

The survey also asked students for the reasons (post hoc) that they had dropped out. Thirty-six percent of males reported, "I had poor grades; I was not doing well in school." The next largest response, "School was not for me; I did not like school," was cited by 35% of the respondents. "I was offered a job and choose to work" was cited by 27%; "I couldn't get along with teachers" was the reason given by 21%; and "I was expelled or suspended" was cited by 13%. For females, the four most common reasons were "I got married or planned to marry," (31%); "School was not for me," (31%); "I had poor grades," (30%); and "Pregnancy" (23%).

It is obvious that these data are generally comparable with the city school system reports summarized here. These national sample survey data are useful for providing a measure against which to examine the city data, but explicit comparisons must be made very carefully. Especially when comparing the overall dropout rate, it should be noted that student demographics in these city systems vary widely from those of the nation as a whole. Moreover, freshman students are not included in this NCES report. This exclusion may account for the difference between the figures for the 1980 sophomore class and the percentage of 18-19 year olds reported by the Bureau of the Census (from Current Population Reports) to have dropped out of high school as of October 1981. This latter figure was 16.0% for all, 17.9% for white males and 13.2% for white females. For black males, the rate was 18.9%, and for black females 19.7%. For those 20 and 21 years old, the dropout rates were as follows: white males, 16.5%; white females, 12.8%; black males, 24.1%; and black females, 22.6%.⁵⁸

Given what previous research has revealed about the characteristics of at-risk students,⁵⁹ it is clear that the interpretation of dropout rates for school districts or for individual schools must take into account the demographics of students served. Reports of single variable analyses, for example, must be viewed with skepticism.⁶⁰

School Accountability

Finally, the current emphasis on accountability of school administrators and teachers and on performance-based contracts must be seen as a double-edged sword. While it clearly directs attention to specific aspects

of school operations and productivity, it also provides an incentive to misreport relevant data.

This paper provides evidence of the problems and the prospects of district-generated dropout research. We certainly need greater consistency in definitions--specifically in the operational definitions of dropout discharge codes and in the grades and categories of students included in the enrollment data base. California, among other states, is moving in this direction by requiring that all districts report data in a consistent manner. While districts may desire one particular method of calculating rates, the use of cohorts--or at least projected four- or six-year longitudinal rates as provided in the Miami, Chicago, and New York City reports--should also be considered. The benefits of including demographic and performance data is clearly demonstrated by the San Diego and Chicago reports. Researchers need to be cautious in interpreting data across districts and states, and especially need to build student composition variables into their models. Finally, administrators need to be on the lookout for intentional misreporting in the design of student information systems and in the use of accountability data.

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APPENDIX H

NEW YORK CITY HIGH SCHOOL SURVEY OF IDENTIFICATION, MONITORING
AND TRACKING OF POTENTIAL DROPOUTS

As a follow-up to the intensive examination of identification, monitoring and tracking in eleven high schools undertaken by the project, a survey of all New York City high schools was conducted to ascertain whether the findings from the smaller sample of schools was typical for all of the City's high schools. The survey questionnaire was constructed so as to yield information relevant to the findings of the field research. It was constructed during the Fall of 1985 and mailed to all principals during December. A follow-up letter and copy of the instrument was mailed to all those schools which had not responded by the middle of January, 1986. A total of 101 responses were received, including 14 from schools in Manhattan, 14 from the Bronx, 14 under the Basis superintendent, 13 from Brooklyn, 17 from Queens, 18 vocational schools, and 11 alternative schools. The questionnaire is reproduced at the end of this report.

The questionnaire did not request demographic information about students nor statistical information about the school's performance. The items included were directly related to the findings of the field research. Added to the data set produced by the coding of the questionnaire were school size in January 1986, number of LTA's in January, 1986, attendance average for January, 1986, and dropout rate for the 1984-1985 school year. In some of the analyses reported below, these added data are utilized. These data were taken from the Revised Attendance Report for January, 1986 and The 1983-1984 Dropout Report. All other data reported here come directly from the responses of those who filled out the questionnaire.

Findings

Recommendation 1.

This recommendation concerned the creation of a uniform system for taking attendance, making home telephone calls, and recording attendance information. According to the survey, 50 schools use the UAPC system, 34 record this information manually, 12 use a school based computer and 5 use either another system (4) or a combination of two (1).

Recommendation 2 and 4.

Although 100 schools report that they have a TELSOL machine, 55 report that it is not interfaced with their computer, while 41 report that it is. 46 (46%) responding schools call all absentee names on an average day, while 54 do not. A wide variety of practices are used for selecting names among those schools which do not call all names, usually involving some system for identifying the most absent youngsters. Some schools, however, reported that they call those absent from particular grades on a given day, others focus primarily on ninth graders and seniors, PREP or SOAR participants, LTA's or other groups. Among the respondents who

reported that fewer than all absentees were called by TELSOL on an average day, the mean percentage of absentees called was 50%.

Knowing that a large proportion of parents of high school students speak a language other than English at home, we asked whether the TELSOL message was recorded in languages besides English. Two thirds the of respondents (66) reported that their message is in other languages, while 33 only used English.

Almost all responding schools report that they notify parents by mail of their student's absences (94 out of 101). Many schools use a form letter or form postcard, and when asked what class of postage is used, of the 69 responding schools, 36 use first class only, 27 only use second class, and 6 used both classes. This is an issue because a second class card or letter may arrive weeks after the absence and if a form, will not identify the date of the absence. Its effectiveness, therefore, may be less than desired by the school.

As to the production of these letters or cards, the survey found that 50 schools use a computer to generate them, while 36 use manual methods and 8 use both a computer and manual methods. Many fewer schools use languages other than English for their written notification to parents than was the case for TELSOL messages. 28 schools send out letters or cards in languages in addition to English, and 66 use only English for this communication with parents or guardians. The methods used by schools for selecting names for sending out mail notification of absences varied as did the methods for selecting TELSOL names. They included all those students for whom the telephone was not answered, at random, names selected from lists of frequently absent or cutting students, those with many absences and who had failing grades, after a specified number of days (often 3 to 5 days) absent and LTA students. There were a large number of different procedures used, though some specific number of days was the most frequent criteria employed.

Recommendation 5.

When asked how many days absent were required for a student to be designated as a long term absentee, 46 schools said 30 days, 38 said 20 days, and a variety of other responses were also given, including 10 days, two months, all days in an attendance period, 5 days, etc. The questionnaire was directed to principals who, undoubtedly, delegated the job of answering our questions to those he or she thought most appropriate. Nevertheless, whether respondents know of Board policy on this matter, they reported the variety of criteria noted above.

Once this designation has been made, calls and letters to parents are among the actions taken by school personnel. In addition, 27 schools reported visits to the student's homes. 23 respondents cite the generation of a 407 form. A number of respondents mentioned referral to an attendance teacher but did not specifically cite the 407 form. As that form is necessary for a referral to an attendance teacher, undoubtedly this procedure is followed by most, if not all schools.

Recommendation 6.

Regarding attendance coordinators, most schools (61) do not have someone who is full-time; 19 have one full-time; 2 schools have 2 full-time and 2 schools have 3 full-time attendance coordinators. Most of the responding schools have one part-time coordinator (49), with 17 reporting none, 13 with 2 working part-time, and 5 with 4, 6, or 8. The number of full-time or part-time attendance coordinators seems unrelated to the average daily attendance (r 's = -0.08 and 0.01 respectively). Virtually the same findings hold for paraprofessionals involved in attendance. Most schools have none (full- or part-time) or at most 3, and there is no relationship between the number of paraprofessionals involved in attendance and the average daily attendance of the schools (r 's = -0.006 for full-time paras, and -0.104 for part-time paras.)

Recommendation 7, 9, 10.

The most important duties of the attendance secretary were identified as first, maintaining records, cited by 81 schools; second, to check the accuracy of attendance reports (cited by 45 schools); and third, to establish and maintain home contact through the TELSOL machine, home visits, and mailing out cards and letters (21 schools cited these functions). The most important duties of paraprofessionals employed in the attendance office were first, maintain home contact through the TELSOL machine, individual telephone calls, letters and visits (67 schools); second, general clerical work, cited by 40 schools; third, daily statistical recording, cited by 32 schools; and fourth, monitor attendance books (27 schools). Answering telephones and helping attendance coordinator were cited by 21 school each.

Recommendation 20.

Regarding classes for long term absentees, 78 schools reported placing LTA's in special classes, while 22 do not use special LTA classes. The survey did not yield information as to the nature of these classes; that is, whether only official classes were used or other, such as subject matter classes, were also designated for LTA's.

Conclusions

In most cases where data from the survey instrument was available, the recommendations derived from the study of eleven high schools are appropriate for all New York City high schools. The survey did yield a greater variety of practices than was the case for the study of the eleven schools and also showed cases where a majority of schools were already doing what was recommended.

The questionnaire contained some items not directly related to recommendations, and the appended questionnaire contains the tabulated responses to the questions asked.

NYC HIGH SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRE

Please check the appropriate response and where needed write your response on the questionnaire. Please use the enclosed stamped envelope to return the questionnaire. Confidentiality is assured.

1. What is the name of your school? _____
2. In which borough is it located? Manhattan:23 Queens:21 St. Island:7
Bronx:18 Brooklyn:31 Missing: 1
3. What type of high school is your school?
56 a) Zoned academic/comprehensive
18 b) Vocational/technical
6 c) Specialized
12 d) Alternative
4. Does your school have an educational options program?
63 a) Yes
If yes, is your school a total educational options school?
8 1) Yes
55 2) No
34 b) No

Attendance

5. What system is used in your school to generate the daily absentee list?
50 a) UAPC 34 c) Manual
12 b) School-based computer 4 d) Other (please specify)
1 Combination of two
6. Does your school have a TELSOL machine?
100 Yes 1 No
7. Does your computer interface with the TELSOL machine for generating a call list?
41 Yes 55 No
8. How are absentee names selected for calling by the TELSOL machine?
(number of days absent, etc.)
46 a) All names are called each day (please skip to question 10)
54 b) Not all names are called each day (please specify criteria employed for selection and then go to question 9)

See Text of Appendix H

9. What percentage of absentee students on an average day receive TELSOL calls? Average: 60.8

10. Is the TELSOL message recorded in languages besides English?
66 Yes Spanish, Chinese, Greek, Vietnamese,
Please list the languages Cambodian
33 No Missing:1

11. Are parents notified by mail of their child's absenteeism?
94 Yes Circle one: First class or third class postage
7 No N= 36 N= 27 Both= 6
Missing= 32

12. If a form letter or postcard is used, how is it generated?
36 By computer system 50 Manually
Both= 8 Missing= 7

13. How are names selected for notification of parents by mail? (Number of days absent, etc.)

See Text

14. Is the form letter or postcard printed in languages besides English?
28 Yes N of Languages: 1=22 3=1
Please list languages 2=3 Missing= 75
66 No Missing= 7

15. In your school, what procedures are involved in the designation of a student as a long term absentee (LTA)? Please answer all three questions.

a) What number of days absent are required to be designated an LTA?

See Text

b) What actions are taken after the designation?

See Text

c) What persons are involved?

See Text

16. Are LTA's placed in a separate class?

78 Yes 22 No

Missing= 1

Staffing

17. How many attendance coordinators are employed in your school?

Average= .35 Full time

Average= 1.25 Part time

18. Briefly describe the three most important responsibilities of the attendance coordinators in your school?

See Text

19. How many days per week is the attendance teacher assigned to your school? Average= 2.6 days

20. In your school, is there a problem with the way case priorities are assigned by the attendance teacher?

21 Yes (explain below) 71 No

Missing= 1

21. In your school, would the role of the attendance teacher be better performed if he or she were supervised by the principal?

50 Yes 42 No

22. Briefly describe the three most important duties of the attendance secretaries in your school?

See Text

23. How many paraprofessionals are assigned to the attendance office?

Average=1.14 Full time

Average=1.23 Part time

24. Briefly describe the three most important duties of the paraprofessionals at your school who are assigned to the attendance office?

See Text

25. What criteria does your school use to identify "at-risk" students in grades ten, eleven and twelve?

The primary answers to this question were: academic performance, attendance patterns, failure and being held back, cutting of classes, referrals from teachers, assistant principals, etc., discipline problems.

26. Have you suggestions for improving the attendance program for New York City High Schools? Please describe.

A wide variety of suggestions were made. The most frequent were: increased staff for home contact and student monitoring, smaller counselor case load, better relations with Dept. of Social Services, smaller schools/classes and suggestions to increase parental involvement.

Thank you!

Please return in stamp envelope provided to:

Dept. of Organizational &
Administrative Studies
New York University
300 East Building
New York, NY 10003